
Communication Optimisation for Education Export

**Export Readiness Examination From an Integrated Marketing
Communication Perspective of the University of Tampere**

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ABSTRACT

We argue that media management is increasingly becoming an indispensable management competence for organisations and communities. This thesis examines the current state of education export operations in a leading university of Finland, the University of Tampere (UTA), as a timely opportunity to address the importance of managing media in an organisation that lacks a marketing tradition and is now attempting to enter the dynamic and increasingly competitive global education export market. The study seeks clarity about the factors that explain performance success in education export.

In short, the answer highlights the importance of managing an organisation's communications in a systematic manner. This encourages taking a strategic approach and the thesis argues for adopting Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). Renowned firms advocate this approach because IMC enables organisations to develop competitive advantage in export business. It is widely considered a necessary and sufficient condition for an organisation pursuing a market orientation, which is the antecedent of "export readiness" and, in turn, determines the export success (or failure).

Firms that are successful with IMC are usually reluctant to share the details of their implementation, because that information is considered an essential aspect of competitive advantage. Fortunately a study conducted by the American Productivity & Quality Centre (APQC) has identified IMC best-practice companies that agreed to tell their experiences. Our study utilises these valuable benchmarks to examine the state of communications strategy in the education export schema of UTA. A two-level (organisational readiness and management readiness) research design was implemented to answer the main research question "How ready is the University of Tampere to export education to China?". The organisational readiness is examined within the APQC's Four Revolutionary Stage Framework, which consists of the best practices. Management readiness was tested with Chris Fill's Marketing Communication Planning Framework (MCPF).

The research results suggest low degree of integration on the organisational level, and moderate degree of integration among the management in UTA's education export operation. Consequently, the organisation as a whole arguably needs to do more to ensure success in export education to China.

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List of Abbreviations

CA	Context Analysis
CMO	Chief Marketing Officer
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DAGMAR	Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results
DMU	Decision Making Units
DRIP	Differentiation, Reinforce, Inform and Persuade
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
HEI	Higher education institution
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communications
IT	Information Technology
Marcom	Marketing Communication
MC	Marketing Communications
MCPF	Marketing Communications Planning Framework
MPR	Marketing Public Relations
PR	Public Relations
ROI	Return on investment
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
UTA	University of Tampere

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1. Introduction

This study applies media management foundations in combination with marketing management and global communication management to investigate the state of export readiness for higher education at the University of Tampere (UTA). As a Media Management student and an employee of the university, I enjoy a unique opportunity to conduct this study. While learning concepts that are characteristic in the field of media management scholarship, issues related to the particular and peculiar requirements for managing media products caught my eye. These issues reflect what has been unclear and difficult about the management of education export.

Media products have their unique characteristics. They are information goods, dual goods and talent goods. This means the value of them is as much intangible as material, that success depends on satisfying the sometimes contradictory interests of different groups and types of customers, and that success depends on the human factor above all. The same is evidently true when thinking about higher education as a “product” (which is not a typical way of thinking about this in Finland). Similarly, the keys to managing media and education products are approximate. Dimensions that include format, quality, price and content leverage matter in both fields. What is more, the Public Service Media (PSM) sector is going through the similar challenges as the Finnish higher education (HE) sector is today, largely as a consequence of the growing impact of globalisation and recessionary conditions. Both sectors are challenged with declining government investment and are being forced to enter the competitive global marketplace to earn their way.

The European Commission supports this trend, called “marketization” in the public sector quite generally, including higher education. Based on the support of relevant experts, the European Commission has highlighted the crucial role of marketing communications in the management of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Porcu, del Barrio-García, Rodríguez-Priego & Crespo-Almendros, 2012). The European government believes this is paramount for efficiently and effectively communicating the value HEIs offer to society, to build strong relationships with all and

diverse stakeholders, and to cultivate a favourable image and reputation both nationally and internationally (ibid.).

Responding to this trend, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland issued a Higher Education Strategy in 2009 to encourage Finnish HEIs to develop commercial activities, such as charging tuition fees for students from outside EU and EEA nations. The policy framework suggests that, “the higher institutions themselves have a key role to play in marketing their competence” (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009). However, the same document suggests that Finnish HEIs do not have a marketing tradition and this poses an obvious and potentially serious problem for realising the recommended strategy in practice. As confirmed by Cai, Hölttä and Kivistö (2012), Finnish universities are not ready to export education due to a lack of market orientation, particularly in terms of competence in marketing techniques and in knowledge of the target markets.

Increasingly, the EU and the Finnish government recognise China as a strategic partner (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2010). China is already the world’s leading importer of higher education from the West, with a share of 15.4% of the international total of foreign students studying at host countries abroad (Nyahoho, 2011)¹. Finland’s Former Prime Minister, Mr. Jyrki Katainen (2013)², signalled a pressing need to find ways to attract and retain talented Chinese students as a valuable resource that can contribute to the improvement in Sino-Finnish trade relations after they graduate from Finnish HEIs. It is clear, then, that Chinese students and the Chinese market are important to Finland.

For China, the education sector in Finland is considered to be one of the most valued and has an excellent reputation (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2010). However, as suggested by

¹ India is the world’s second, and it takes up 5% (Nyahoho, 2011).

² In Talents Available happening on September 5, 2013, Finnish Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen held the opening speech. News story retrieved from:

http://www.uudenmaanliitto.fi/uudenmaan_liitto/uutishuone/tiedotteet/talents_available-tapahtuma_vetovoimaa_kansainvalisten_ammattilaisten_houkutteluun.11517.news. [Accessed 4 February 2014].

Harvard Professor Pasi Sahlberg (2013), himself a Finn, many scholars believe that free education is Finland's main asset. Adopting a strategy of demanding tuition fees for non-EU students would likely create as many problems as it would solve. Although the Chinese government does not seem to prioritise Finland as a cross-border 'education destination' nation at this time, that might change. The Chinese Vice-Minister of Education, Mr. Yubo Du, shared a list of expectations with the Finnish Minister of Education and Science, Ms. Krista Kiuru, during her visit in China on November 19, 2013. The results indicate that China wants to increase co-operation in five areas 1) education policy dialogue, 2) training of principals and administrators, 3) teacher training, 4) research cooperation and 5) teaching staff exchanges (H. Melin, personal communication, December 11, 2013). We note that these areas are not particularly related to the commercial opportunity emphasis that has been envisioned by Finland's government.

Finnish universities are responsible figuring out how to operationalise the general strategy preferred by government and are expected to realise achievement in the target areas. The management of the University of Tampere adopted a market orientation earlier (as early as 2011) and more aggressively than most HEIs in Finland, and has established an education export company to ensure successful implementation. Called Finland University Inc., the company launched on January 2, 2014 as a joint venture together with the University of Eastern Finland (with campuses in Joensuu, Kuopio and Savonlinna) and the University of Turku. The company will handle all the marketing and sales operations with for these universities, aspects with which they are traditionally unfamiliar.

Together with its partners, the University of Tampere places particular emphasis on the importance of co-operation with China. So much so that a Chinese Education, Research and Exchange Centre (CEREC) was established in 2011 to promote and strengthen Sino-Finnish co-operation in the field of higher education.

However, in contrast to the strong support that university managers evidence for this endeavour, the university community at large does not view all of this positively. Some professors and teaching staff speak sarcastically about education export, expressing both resentment and resistance. There are

various reasons, but among the most important is discomfort with commercial activities. This indicates an inherent different higher education culture than what we find characteristic in the United States, in the UK, and in Australia and New Zealand. The latter three countries have undergone a comparatively revolutionary transformation in recent years to accommodate this approach, which is therefore arguably more American in complexion than much of the rest of the world.

The international trend is clear and one has good reason to believe that it is only a matter of time before Finnish HEIs engage more aggressively in the increasingly competitive HE global marketplace. The fact that the essential actors are ready in place here certainly reflects the seriousness of these strategic directions. However, the degree to which the university community as a whole is market oriented and ready for export must have a significant bearing on the degree to which the strategy succeeds in practice, and to which Finnish HEI is competitive in the global marketplace.

Success in HE export is partly determined by export readiness (Naidoo, 2010, shown in Figure 1 below) which requires an organisation to be market orientated and that means more than only disposed to embrace the notion. It inherently also means developing the capabilities required to act effectively in practice. This, as tested by Naidoo (2010), is most secure with the adoption of an integrated marketing strategy, which necessarily implies, in this case, that all the schools and the functional departments of the university as a whole are both customer-oriented and highly coordinated in terms of inter-functionality. That is prerequisite to responding effectively to the opportunities in a global market.

As in marketing strategy quite generally, the organisation must clearly identify the customer/s it will target and seeks to serve (e.g. Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). In this thesis we begin with an assumption that it is possible to enter the global education market and, further, that doing so means UTA and Finland University Inc. need an integrated marketing communication approach to steer decision making and strategy implementation, specifically related to the competitive Chinese market. The education services discussed in this research are primarily adult education. Since product development and pricing are beyond the scope of this research, and the physical product availability

is not applicable yet, communicating values to the stakeholders (marketing communication) is the focus of our study. Figure 1 illustrates the expected relationships between the concepts that have been discussed so far.

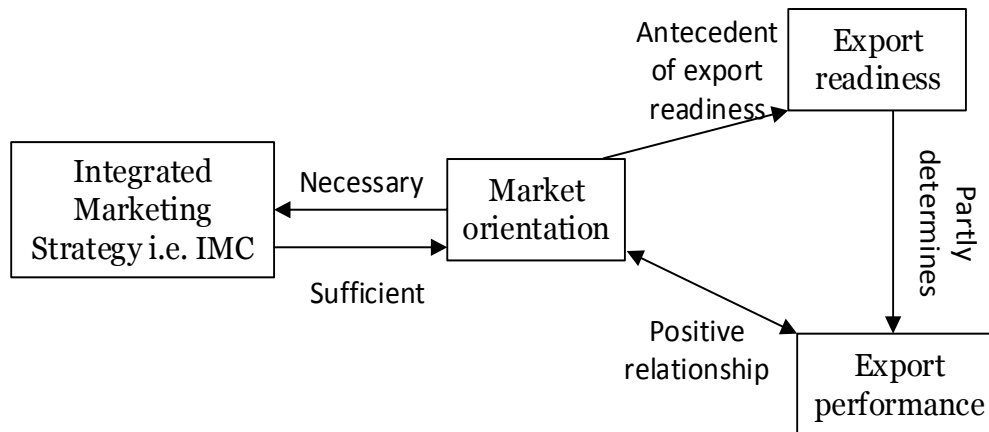


Figure 1: Research Rationale: *IMC has a positive relationship with export performance and export readiness.* Source: own figure based on literature review for this thesis.

Recognisably, the study subject - adoption of an integrated marketing communication approach (IMC) in UTA's higher education export strategy for China is an on-going process. At the stage when the study was conducted the management of this communication and marketing project was clearly at the experimental stage and located at some juncture between efforts in domestic marketing and the pre-export stage for China (Cavusgil, 1980). It is therefore an opportune moment to investigate the organisation's export readiness and its market orientation, because these will be crucial success factors for HE exportation. Therefore, it is vital to examine the degree to which integrated marketing communication is or is not adopted by the management team at the University of Tampere because that matters for the project's success – or will partly account for its failure.

To investigate the issue, a two-level research design was applied. The main research question is: **How ready is the University of Tampere to export education to China?** This was measured on the basis

of five factors that together indicate an organisation's market orientation: the organisation's 1) customer-orientation 2) competitor orientation 3) export co-ordination 4) export competence and 5) management commitment. These factors are essential to any IMC strategy, as supported in Naidoo's work (2010) that indicates IMC is both a necessary and sufficient condition to an appropriate market orientation.

The examination of the University of Tampere's (UTA) export readiness is approached at a macro-level and at a micro-level. The macro-level is organisational and looks at the institution as a whole. The research question is: **To what degree has UTA advanced in the IMC process?** The degree of integration is tested using the classic instrument created by American Productivity and Quality Centre (1998), an approach called *The Four Evolutionary Stages of IMC*. Through participant observation and purposive sampling for in-depth interviews, the research clarifies the organisation's degree of 1) customer-orientation 2) competitor orientation and 3) export co-ordination.

The micro-level is managerial and is designed to address two market orientation factors: 4) export competence and 5) management commitment. The research question on this level is: **How ready is the UTA management to export education to China?** According to IMC planning framework, "*Marketing Communication Planning Framework (MCPF)*" adopted from Fill (2005, p.347), information ought to be collected to fulfil a list of decisions that are relevant to achieving the efficiency and effectiveness that IMC promises to deliver. That inherently means that success is conditional. This part of the research project will examine management readiness from the standpoint of their export competence, especially related to attitudinal and behavioural elements.

To validate the results from the interviews and the questionnaire, a focus group instrument was used. The members of the focus group were all representatives from the nine schools within UTA's administrative structure, plus UTA's student union and UTA's Chinese Education, Research and Exchange Centre (CEREC).

The reason for emphasising the importance of integration is not to criticise UTA's management but to contribute to an increase the responsiveness of UTA to the opportunities offered in and by the Chinese market for HEI. Our aims are to help the management team optimise the application of the university's resources, map out inter-functional links in education export, and improve communication efficiency. The stakes for the university's future funding and operational practice are high and therefore merit critical examination.

This study provides a fresh perspective and an alternative approach that is both timely and credible for examining the university's market orientation and export readiness in education export. The work is grounded in the emerging field of media management and economics, a graduate studies programme at the university. It contributes to the continuing development of this field in Finland and at UTA. It is fascinating to observe the similarities between the nature of media products and education products, which further justifies the deployment of our cross-disciplinary approach that has been supported by both the School of Communication, Media & Theatre and the School of Management.

Having clarified the rationale and purpose of the study, we next discuss the research gaps that this study contributes to filling. That is important to clarify why the study is important. Afterwards the author moves to a background chapter that explores the meanings of education export in the Finnish context, disputes over the marketization of education here, and implications in understandings about media products that have a useful bearing on considerations of education products.

1.1 Research gaps

One recent survey of Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) from leading marketing companies found that "putting the consumer at the heart of marketing" was the topmost strategic theme (see Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, p. 82). To succeed in today's hyper competitive marketplaces, companies and organisations need to develop customer-driven and outside-in marketing strategies. The concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC) has evolved in response to this reality, originating in earlier approaches that featured inside-out tactics to instead prioritise the outside-in strategic process.

IMC has swept the marketing world and is now generally accepted by most businesses as preferred approach (Kitchen, et al., 2004). IMC has been advocated and discussed in the academic literature, as well (see especially Schultz, 1993; Duncan, 2002; Fill, 2002).

Varied sectors are adopting IMC philosophy in developing approaches to strategic planning. The literature suggests that benefits arising from the application of this paradigm across sectors, including HE (Edmiston-Strasser, 2009), have made IMC a crucial strategic element today, with an evident role in creating a sustainable advantage for many types of organisation that implement it successfully (Porcu, et al., 2012). The higher education sector, where universities are increasingly told to do more with less (Rowley, Lujan & Dolence, 1997), should find IMC of considerable strategic and practical value. However, the current research on marketing for higher education has yet to thoroughly examine the adoption of an IMC approach by universities, and has not yet adequately mapped how they manage the integration process. For instance, the extent to which HEIs have adopted IMC as part of their strategic management approach has not been well understood (Edmiston-Strasser, 2009). The work reported in this thesis will contribute to filling a gap in both research and for practice, and will provide relevant information derived from a new research context—the international education sector in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Finland.

This is relevant because HE is fast becoming a global business (Naidoo, 2010). The essential interest in Finland is not surprising, but it is in fact already a highly competitive arena and Finnish HEIs lack experience and expertise at this point. As forecasted by the UK government (2012)³, the global education sector is expected to grow by a compound annual growth rate of 7% from 2013 to 2017 as a result of demographic changes and high levels of expenditure on higher and specialised education by emerging economies. While the number of international students at the tertiary level has maintained an average annual growth rate of 8,4% since 2000 (Naidoo, 2010) and the pool of potential students continues to increase as a brisk rate. This offers attractive potential for economic development among HEIs that are struggling with reductions in funding and troublesome deficits.

³ Education Sector Factbook 2012. GSV EDU.

The research reported in this thesis sheds lights on education export in Finland, a new topic here in which study about the business aspects is lacking both in fundamental research and elaboration in the existing research literature (e.g. Cai, Hölttä & Kivistö, 2012). Studies about marketing in this sector rarely mention a “customer-centric” focus (Ross, Heaney & Cooper, 2007, cited in Naidoo, 2010). The topics are rather restricted to the following: the implications of policies (Hölttä, 2007, cited in Cai, et al., 2012; Cai & Hölttä, 2006, cited in *ibid.*), tuition fee models (Hölttä & Kivistö, 2009), and China as a potential market (Cai, 2010, cited in Cai, et al., 2012). The point of this research here is to contribute to a better understanding of the degree to which it is reasonable to expect UTA, and indeed Finnish HEI more generally, to succeed in the project to export HE to China.

Although criticised within academia and by government for lacking a marketing tradition (e.g. Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009; Cai et al., 2012), Finland is beginning to remedy the lack but is hampered by the absence of this type of research that is needed to support smart decision-making and strategic planning. Suspicions about the commercial aspects of what is essentially a public good are frequently suggested to support preserving the state quo and resisting the proposed change. This is not surprising because research has found it to be true quite generally and not only in Finland (Naidoo, 2010). With the commercialisation of education growing at a phenomenal rate, however, and given the policy imperatives now characteristic of HEI in Finland, it is time this research gap be addressed. Our study makes a contribution by examining the readiness of UTA as the case university, the success of which is partly determined by how well the integration of the university’s marketing communication strategies is managed, and the degree of integration of the marketing communication strategies.

Previous studies indicate a positive relationship between market orientation and export performance. Market orientation stems from the use of an integrated marketing strategy as opposed to a more elementary approach to export education (Naidoo, 2010). An organisation’s export co-ordination, defined as the integration of inter-functional capabilities, is a key antecedent to the success of market-oriented activities (Cardogan et al., 2002, cited in Naidoo, 2010). Market co-ordination accelerates the organisation’s learning process and allows increased responsiveness to customer needs (Naidoo,

2010). All of this is of evident and crucial importance to UTA and its sister HEI partners in the project of developing Finnish education export. The degree to which the export education marketing communication activities of these partners are integrated will indicate the degree to which they have adopted a market orientation. When combined with other important exogenous elements (e.g. market turbulence), IMC will have a decisive role in determining education export performance.

1.2 The case

The University of Tampere is one of 14 multidisciplinary universities in Finland. It consists of nine schools:

1. Institute of Biomedical Technology (IBT)
2. School of Information Sciences (SIS)
3. School of Management (JKK)
4. School of Education (EDU)
5. School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies(LTL)
6. School of Medicine
7. School of Health Sciences (HES)
8. School of Communication, Media and Theatre (CMT)
9. School of Social Sciences and Humanities (YKY).

In 2012 there were 15,811 students, out of which 604 are international students. This is a comparative fraction, accounting for only 4% of the total student population. That certainly suggests considerable room for growth and opportunity for development. Out of 2,049 personnel⁴, only 5.6% was in the category of “international personnel”. That, too, is a relatively small percentage for a university that has ambitions to become truly international in complexion. It is equally important to observe that UTA personnel and faculty are aging, as is the country overall. According to the UTA Human Resources department, more than 40% of all personnel and half of permanent faculty members will reach retirement age within the next ten years. The total funding for the University of Tampere was

⁴ From 2012 Annual Report. Students include Bachelor’s and Master’s degree students, doctoral students and professional postgraduate students. Personnel include teaching and research staff and other stuff.

187,243,000 euros in 2012, of which the core funding under the University Act constituted 60%. The rest was derived from external funding, investments and capital gains. It is important to understand that this percentage of state funding will continue to decline in the years immediately ahead, implying added pressure to succeed in HE export.

The organisation structure is shown below in Figure 2. The Collegiate Body, a 45-member executive management group, approves the financial results and the annual report of the UTA every year, and selects the Chancellor when the time for nomination comes, and chooses the external members of the University Board. The supreme executive body is the University Board (Figure 2).

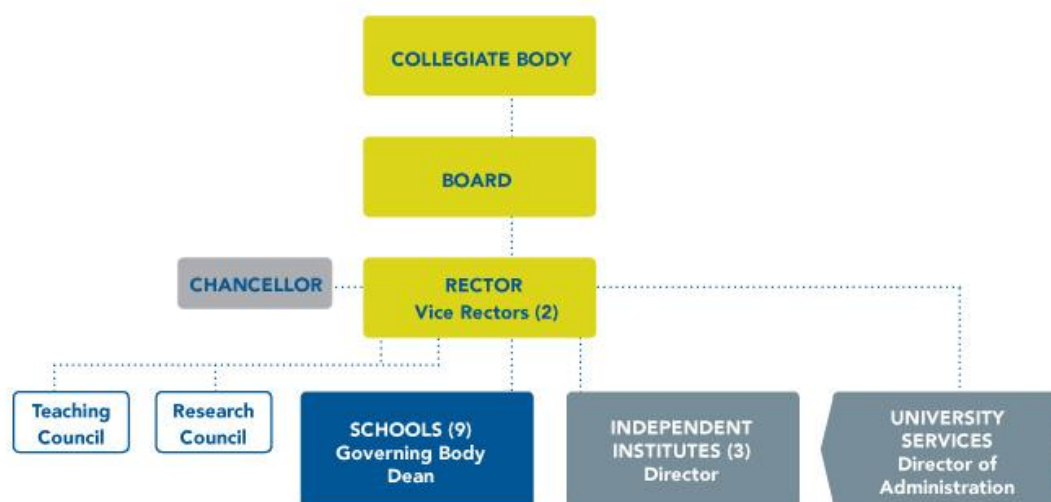


Figure 2: UTA Organisation. Source: University of Tampere 2012 Annual Report

Initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2009 (see references) and approved by the Finnish State Council (in Finnish “valtionneuvosto”, 2010), “the competence of the higher education sector in Finland and the export of education should become a significant national export product and part of the driving force of Finland’s export”⁵. The University of Tampere has been a pioneering role in explicitly adopting an export strategy as an essential focus for its development.

⁵ The original text in Finnish: ”Tavoitteena on, että korkeakoulujen osaamisen ja koulutuksen viennistä tulee kansallisesti merkittävä vientituote ja osa suomalaista viennin edistämistä.” Retrieved from: <http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2009/liitteet/opm21.pdf?lang=fi>.

Related to this, UTA recruited Ms. Mirka Gustafsson to be the first Education Export Co-ordinator and also established a board called Education Export Group for making university-wide decisions on education export. At the beginning of 2013, the Rectors from the University of Tampere, the University of Turku and the University of Eastern Finland agreed to establish an export company to jointly handle all three universities' export functions. The company was established in October, 2013 as Finland University Inc. The CEO Mr. Pasi Kaskinen was selected in December 2013 and the company started operation on January 2, 2014. This study was conducted precisely in this period.

In the autumn of 2011 the Chinese Education, Research and Exchange Centre (CEREC) was founded under the Higher Education Group (HEG) in the School of Management (JKK). The missions then were to promote academic exchanges and co-operation between Finland and China in the field of higher education management as well as to establish a dialogue for higher education policy. Business operation was mentioned, although defined as “consulting and match-making”. The university was not explicitly using the term “education export”. Through CEREC’s network a group of Chinese education administrators visited Finland to participate in a two-week adult education-training project in autumn 2012. They are considered as the first “customer” and encouraged a drive for UTA to brainstorm a co-responding system. After more than two years efforts and negotiations, CEREC was moved from the School of Management to become a university-level network. All nine schools have nominated representatives to join the CEREC-network (by the end of 2013), and the Vice-Rector Professor Harri Melin of UTA was elected Chairperson. The new network started operations at the beginning of 2014.

The functions of two other organisations are also relevant for this study. These are the Centre for International Education (in Finnish: Kansainvälisen koulutuksen keskus) and Press and Information Office (in Finnish: Viestintäpalvelut). According to the university’s website (www.uta.fi), “the Centre for International Education coordinates education export at the University of Tampere” (University of Tampere, 2014a). The Press and Information Office, as described on the website, “maintains the university’s external and internal communication channels and assists the university’s management, units and personnel in their communication tasks” (University of Tampere, 2014b).

In chapter 2 we provide the rationale for education export as the backdrop for the initiative that is empirically studied in the thesis. Most importantly, we clarify how education export is defined in UTA's terms. Chapter 3 provides the analytical framework, elaborating the interrelationships between key concepts. In this chapter, the key focus is the fascinating nature of integrated marketing communication (IMC), which has expanded from a tool that aligns all external communication programmes to become a strategy that incorporates the organisation's total sales and marketing efforts to create competitive advantage. To accomplish the two-level enquiry, two IMC frameworks—APQC's *The Four Revolutionary Stages of IMC* and Chris Fill's *Marketing Communication Planning Framework (MCPF)*—are treated in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 4 describes the methods and the instruments used for the two-level research design. On the organisation level, the study uses a mix of qualitative methods to answer the research question **“To what degree has UTA advanced in the IMC process?”**, and on the management level, a quantitative questionnaire instrument is used to collect data for answering the question **“How ready are the management to export education to China?”**. A focus group is used to answer the more general research question, **“How ready is the University of Tampere to export education to China?”**. The focus group incorporates the findings from the two-level investigation.

In chapter 5 we present the research results and findings from measuring the market orientation at UTA. The theories and the instruments are reflected upon and three managerial implications are summarised for the reader's consideration. Towards the end of the thesis, the limitations of the research are discussed, and some future research recommendations are given.

2. Education Export Rationale: Search For the Source of Competitive Advantage

What is education export? The answer is more complicated than one might think. To ponder this notion one needs some national perspective, and these days the perspective involves concerns about societal changes and designs for economic growth. Figure 3 below illustrates the causal relationship between the issues that will be talked about in this chapter.



Figure 3: Education Export Rationale. Source: own figure.

2.1 Societal changes and economic growth

Finland is undergoing a transition due to changes in the age structure of the population (Tuukkanen, 2006). Its aging population will lead to great structural problems (Hautamäki, 2001) if comparatively drastic measures are not taken now. As suggested by Finnish Ministry of Finance (Tuukkanen, 2006), the only sustainable ways to finance the growth of public expenditure needed to care for one of the world's fastest aging population are 1) "slowing down the growth rate of public expenditure" and simultaneously 2) "ensuring good rates of employment and economic growth."

The population aged 65 and over in Finland is increasing and it is projected by Statistics Finland (2013 b) to 22,6% of the population by 2020 (the projected share of this age group is by comparison only 12% in China and 19% in the UK by 2020, according to BBC, 2012). According to Finland's National Institute for Health and Welfare, the aging population and low fertility rate has already resulted in a constant rise in the amount of public expenditure that must be allocated to finance social protections and related services, especially old age pension and health care (Statistics Finland, 2013c). This is highly problematic because the labour force rate has been about the same (Statistics Finland, 2013a), which means that it is shrinking in real terms. In practice, this means that fewer and fewer wage-earning workers must produce an ever-increasing GDP for the society to afford the social

protections that Finns have come to expect. The immediate solution is to drive down the public expenditure allocated to other sectors, and that certainly includes higher education.

Thus, the internationalisation of HEIs in Finland has profound strategic implications for the nation and its HEIs. In point of fact international students have been a catalyst for economic growth in most countries, a point perhaps often overlooked in discussion about immigration policy (see especially chapters 12 and 13 in Florida, 2011⁶). For its own future economic vitality, it is vital that Finland encourage immigration. The internationalisation of higher education in Finland aims to bring economic growth and to ensure this small country is able to maintain global competitiveness (Wit, pp. 89 – 90). This has a bearing on which is best to pursue to make that happen: whether via a fee-based systems (as in the UK and the US for instance) or in public-funded systems (Finland and Norway for instance). Finland's current policy perspective needs to be long-term, and enhancing the international competitiveness of the HEI system is in the first instance considered and supported as an area of wise investment.

It is important to understand that international students that come here for studies very often decide to stay in Finland after graduation. This happens mainly due to marriage with Finnish citizens and employment opportunities that have been reasonably good until recently. Those that stay contribute to the labour market and the national treasury. They may also bring in foreign investments because many are oriented towards starting their own businesses, which further fuels growth and innovation of the country that really must depend on that for its longer-term prosperity.

It is also important to understand that the competition for international students is growing. As the international director Ms. Ulla Gjølring at Aarhus University in Denmark said (Whitehead, 2012), these students help to build the university's network and increase potential for future collaboration of many kinds. In our view, it is not likely that HEI can generate a lot of direct institutional income, or make truly significant contributions to the national economy even with a fee-based system. A long-

⁶ Professor Markku Sotarauta in the UTA School of Management participated in the studies that ground results, suggesting as well the relevance of the book's theme and thesis as this applies to Finland.

term investment perspective should be the driver in plans to attract outstanding international students, recognising that increases will contribute significantly over time and in largely indirect consequence.

In the future it is rather certain they will pay tuition fees in Finland, however. Perhaps that will contribute something to a more effective public expenditure reallocation, although it is possible that requiring fees will put Finland's universities into more direct competition with attractive options in the USA and the UK.

2.2 Legislative change

It is notable that fully 70% of the international students studying in Finland agree that the biggest attraction the country offers as a provider of higher education is *the lack of tuition fees* (Yulia, et al., 2012, p. 25). "Free education" has been Finland's biggest competitive advantage in attracting the international students (Cai, 2012). This is likely to change, however. The strategy for the Internationalisation of HEIs in Finland 2009 – 2015 (Finnish Ministry of Education, 2009) encourages Finnish HEIs to charge tuition fees. How this will work in practice remains to be seen, but even if only a modest fee is involved it means Finland will lose its key competitive advantage—cost leadership.

In the international market for higher education, institutions are seeking for ways to develop sustainable competitive advantages in efforts to recruit the best international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001, p. 1). On August 15, 2013, Finland's Minister of Education and Science, Ms. Krista Kiuru, set up a working group mandated with drafting an action plan to promote education exports. The key focus was to explore the possibilities for charging tuition fees from students arriving from outside the EU and EEA nations, while at the same time increasing the number of foreign degree students at Finnish universities and polytechnics (from the current 20 000 to at minimum 60 000). Abolishing the current legislation that prohibits a tuition fee system for international student and proposing a new system that would allow that was the mission of this paper. Notably, there are only around 2 000 Chinese students in total, undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate students, studying in Finland as a whole (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto, 2013), which indicates a large potential of

increase. Of course, the big question is whether growing the volume of international students (from wherever other than the EU and EEA countries) by two-thirds is achievable if the current key competitive advantage is lost.

2.3. Tuition fees, but...

As stated, free education has been one of the biggest advantages in attracting international students to Finland. Of course, it is not the only competitive advantage. Finland has a reputation for excellence in education, although that mainly applies to primary and secondary schooling – not university education. The beauty of Finland's nature and the quality of life offered here are also alluring. As the strategy of Ministry states, Finland recognises this economic advantage. It has likewise an asset for Sweden and Denmark - until recently. There the tuition-based system has already been implemented and the consequences appear to be dire. As critics have observed (e.g. Mitchell, 2013), the implementation of the international tuition fees policy was a bold show of confidence in the quality of Swedish and Danish higher education, but in fact statistics have shown that the two countries suffered severe crashes in foreign student recruitment and the earlier high figures are not recovering.

Take Sweden, for example. According to the Higher Education in Sweden – 2013 Status Report, published by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (2013), their HEIs saw a jaw-dropping decline from 7,600 to 1,600 occurred in newly enrolled non-EU students for the start of the 2011 – 2012 academic year. Apologists attributed blame to the fact that the tuition fee system was implemented in a rush, but one certainly has cause to wonder if there is enough inherent “value for money” in requiring fees there when those who must pay can then as easily or readily look instead at the UK and USA? For the two countries where graduate level education is considered very well developed and successful have high international respect. It is of course understood that comparative fees are much higher in those countries than in Sweden or Denmark, and presumably than in Finland, but the point is to ask if any of these countries are strong enough competitors in other dimensions to sacrifice what is clearly the most effective competitive advantage? The evidence so far is not encouraging.

Arguably, the future of internationalisation at Finnish HEIs would become an uphill endeavour if the tuition fees policy is implemented without profound examination of all the implications. The results need to inform the planning of rates and systems. In the absence of this “due diligence”, Finland courts losing more than it would gain – with realising more harm than help for its economic situation. Facing the long established and widely respected international education brands from great universities in the US, the UK and Australia, and without salient competitive advantages to counter them, Finnish HEIs are likely to be out-matched in the competition for global talents. The silver lining, perhaps, is that Finnish compulsory education and Finnish education system as a whole has received enormous praise around the world and is often seen as a model elsewhere. These in particular are referring to Finland’s placement in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC). Nevertheless, as earlier noted, these data do not refer as specifically to “the value of money”. In other words, such reputation does not directly signal what the customer wants and how much the customer is willing to pay (or not willing to pay at all).

2.4 Education Export defined in UTA’s terms

Although widely discussed and strongly recommended in the literature, hardly any author has explored the full dimensions of export education. There is a tendency to equate education export to international student recruitment (e.g. Nadoo, 2010). The World Trade Organisation’s Council for Trade in Services (1998) attempted to segment education services into four broad categories: Primary Education Services, Secondary Education Services, Higher (or Tertiary) Education Services and Adult Education⁷. Concerning the Finnish context, Hölttä (2007, cited in Cai et al., 2012) provided a useful taxonomy of five models of internationalisation: 1) traditional individual based mobility, 2) internationalisation based on bilateral institutional agreements, 3) programme based internationalisation (mainly in the framework of the European Union), 4) internationalisation based on institutional and disciplinary networks, and 5) market based internationalisation.

⁷ World Trade Organisation: Council for Trade in Services, *Education Services – Background Note by the Secretariat*, 23 September 1998, unpublished.

The education legislation reform underway in Finland implies a transition from Category No.2—No.4 to Category No.1 and No. 5. Strictly speaking, internationalisation activities No. 2—No. 4 are not about trading. However, they can be understood as ‘knowledge circulation’, which plays a crucial role in education export as justified by the Ministry. Finland has a comparatively small higher education and research system compared to the leading nations in academic achievements (i.e. the UK and USA). With increasing competition in the global international education market, Finnish academics recognise the necessity to join networks and attract expertise to Finland (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013, p.17). This is the only way, as suggested by the Ministry’s working group, to bring about a virtuous circle of quality and reputation, which in turn might serve as a source of competitive advantage. Perhaps, but this remains to be seen in practice. It is a hope, certainly, and an ambition – but whether it is a viable design is uncertain.

One also needs to accommodate the fact that the perceived reputation of an education institution or system as a whole is not completely controllable (Naidoo, 2010). Among the controllable factors, the institution (especially) can influence the success of an export strategy (Mazzarol, 1998; Mazzarol & Soutar, 1999, 2002, cited in Naidoo, 2010). One of those controllable factors that constitute the focus of this thesis is export readiness (Holmes, 1996, cited in *ibid.*), and this concept will be elaborated further in next chapter that develops the analytical framework. However, much of what happens is in a sense “hostage” to some, if not all, of uncontrollable factors. It complies with unforeseeable changes in the HEI policies and practices elsewhere, as well as conditions in diverse domestic economies (and indeed the world economy overall). Natural events that can cause complications (natural calamities or social unrest, for example), successes or failures in the sector that attract international coverage (perhaps as a result of one individual’s actions or one institution’s practices), and so forth may also contribute to the matter.

As uncertain as the rest of world about the term “education export”, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2013) chose to play it safe by narrowing the goal of education export to increasing the number of foreign degree students at Finnish universities and polytechnics. However, the Ministry’s working group does not explicitly state which sectors or areas that export efforts should be focused

on (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013), which leaves the Finnish HEIs to improvise in the arena of global international education marketplace.

The University of Tampere, together with select partners in other Finnish HEIs has responded by starting an education export venture. As one-third owner of an education export company Finland University Inc., it has attempted to define this business in its own terms. In a document called *Principles of Education Export at the University of Tampere (2014, available on the UTA's website)*, education export is defined as follows:

Education export means chargeable, educational programmes or services provided by the University of Tampere for international customers. The main target group in this context is post-experienced professionals. The possible education export activities at UTA include:

- *commissioned degree programmes*
- *parts of degree programmes*
- *continuous education programmes*
- *professional development programmes (MBAs, eMBAs)*
- *educational consultancy services*

The range is quite broad and suggests that more or less anything and everything can be considered as having some potential viability in this pursuit. It is not clear how competitive the various bits and parts, or indeed the university and its educational services as a whole, actually is in the international market for these services. At least so far the approach seems to be a push-strategy that lacks sufficient clarity about its pull-potential. The lack of clarity in a definition is undoubtedly a problem. What has been discussed so far demonstrates a typical product-centric instead of customer-centric way of thinking.

From the previous chapter, we have embraced the commitment and the consistent efforts from the UTA's management in executing the marketization of HE strategies of the EU and the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland, particularly to the Chinese market. In this chapter, we reviewed the issue from a national perspective, involving particularly the impact HE has on economy and society in Finland. The overall policy framework on marketization of HE in Finland merits further consideration. Education export has so far been interpreted the answer to solve the problems caused

by the societal changes, and to fuel the economic growth, which means it has a bearing on Finland's future. The success of export performance has implications not only to the institution, but also to the nation. The key to achieve success is to root the organisation's competitive advantage in those of controllable factors in export, namely export readiness. This thesis contributes to developing a deepening of understanding about the issues pertinent to education export at the planning stage as this applies to UTA. To make that contribution we need an appropriate analytical framework, the focus of chapter 3.

3. Analytical Framework

The relationship is complicated between and among the key concepts in this study (Figure 1). The summary contribution for this thesis is in the underlined links that demonstrate interdependent relationships. Although many authors have explored the positive linkages between market orientation and export readiness, and those of market orientation and export performance, the package as a whole is less treated. The findings from other studies (especially Narver & Slater, 1990; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993, cited in Cadogan & Diamantopoulos, 1995; Prasad et al., 2001; Naidoo, 2010) inform the model portrayed in the figure which is an illustration of the tested relationships between the concepts.

Although studies on market orientation seem always to conclude with a claim about the necessity of integrated marketing strategy (Cadogan & Diamantopoulos, 1995; Prasad et al., 2001; Naidoo, 2010), no study was found that has actually tested export readiness through the integrated marketing strategy i.e. integrated marketing communication (IMC) perspective. This thesis is using the IMC theoretical framework to test the export readiness in UTA's efforts to export higher education. We will assess the concept of IMC, but begin with discussion about the concepts of export readiness and market orientation, and their relationships with IMC.

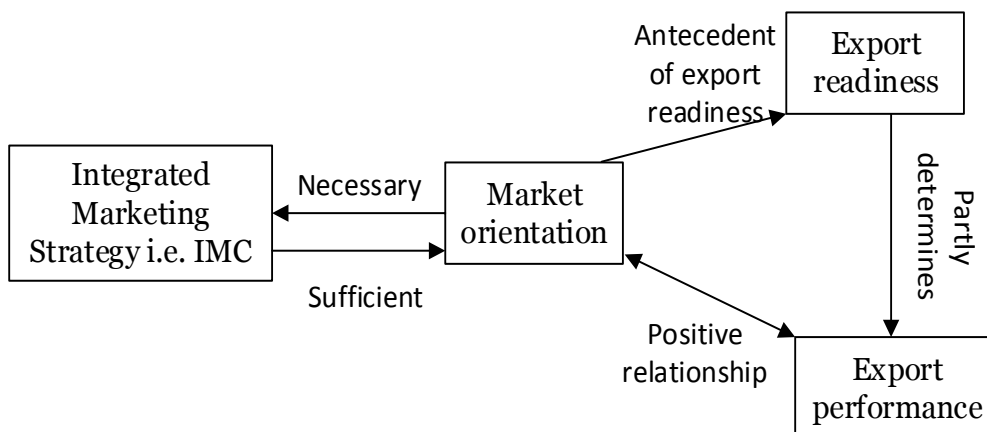


Figure 1: Research Rationale: *IMC has positive relationship with export performance and export readiness*. Source: own figure based on literature review for this thesis.

3.1 Connecting export readiness to IMC

In institutional terms, export readiness (also called internationalisation readiness) describes a pre-export phase. Stemming from the Uppsala model⁸ (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, cited in Li & Dimitratos, 2013), internationalisation is viewed as a sequential process, and the pre-internationalisation stage is critical in making a determination as to whether or not the institution will proceed to internationalise (typically gradually). To clarify the current state of the University of Tampere regarding education export the Uppsala model is not sufficient, because it does not explain how the process is initiated before internationalisation (Li & Dimitratos, 2013). Instead, we have chosen Cavusgil's (1980) I-model (I stands for internationalisation) to explain why UTA is at the pre-internationalisation stage and because it is more appropriate for explaining how export readiness offers is conducive for the opportunity an organisation has to better prepare itself for the practice.

3.1.1 Pre-export phase

Adopting Cavusgil's (1980) I-model, a traditional firm's pathway to grow internationally consists of five stages:

- 1) domestic marketing
- 2) pre-export
- 3) experimental involvement
- 4) active involvement
- 5) committed involvement

Although research on international business has been vibrant in recent decades, the pre-internationalisation stage has insofar received little scholarly attention (Li & Dimitratos, 2013). The University of Tampere is undergoing a transition phase from "domestic marketing" to "pre-export".

⁸ The model suggests an incremental process in the internationalisation of businesses. The name is given because this sequence was partly developed as the result of research carried out on Scandinavian countries in the 1970s (e.g. Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, cited in Healey, 2008). The four stages of the sequence are: 1) exporting, 2) licensing production, 3) joint ventures and 4) sole ventures.

That applies to the organisation overall, even if the management is a bit ahead and moving towards the experimental involvement phase.

The domestic marketing stage is characterised by no interest and no willingness to experiment with exporting. It typically features unfavourable attitudes and lack of awareness of foreign market opportunities (Li & Dimitratos, 2013).

At the pre-export stage, various internal and external stimuli contribute to arousing initial interest in exporting among decision makers. In the UTA case, there are two drivers that can be understood as stimuli: the international education policy change and strategic emphasis on China. However, as the theory also specifies (Cavusgil, 1980), at this stage the existing staff has no prior experience as importantly, the management lacks important basic information. What is lacking that truly matters is namely “what costs are involved, how the collection and exchange risks will be handled, (and) how the distribution is to be arranged”. Thus, at the pre-export stage the institution wants to export but lacks the degree of expertise that only comes from in-depth study and experience that is cumulative.

The current situation of UTA cannot be described entirely by the pre-export stage from the I-model. In fact, there are great differences between perceptions among the management of the university and the staff. Despite the drivers (Leonidou, et al., cited in Li & Dimitratos, 2013), namely the potential for additional revenue to be earned from exporting, receipt of unsolicited orders from foreign customers, special managerial interest, government export incentives and encouragement by government agencies, the whole university is not on board with the plan of exporting education.

Some faculty at UTA are currently unwilling to be involved. Besides concerns about incentives and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and a more general issue is the point of their work is to conduct and publish scholarly research – not teach more students at home or export teaching services abroad. There is merit to this line of thinking because the Finnish promotion system increasingly resembles what the American system calls ‘publish or perish’ (if not to such an extreme).

Through CEREC, UTA has already found strategic alliances, which, according to Cavusgil's I-model, is depicted as a feature of the fifth stage when the institution features committed involvement in export. So there is clearly a disjunction at the moment between the administrative management of UTA and important constituencies within the university community, although there is variability in the attitudes between the nine schools and their faculties with regard to supporting or resisting the policy. The School of Management, JKK for short, is perhaps the most committed in practice so far. To increase the export readiness of the whole university community, UTA's management needs to make far more effort to engage all the internal stakeholders. Although IMC is not the only answer, it is one important tool for more effective internal marketing and communication.

3.1.2 From export readiness to market orientation

According to Naidoo (2010), of all the aspects studied in international business and marketing literatures, the marketing orientation of the organisation is by far one of the most well-examined antecedents of export readiness (Day, 1992, cited in Naidoo, 2010). Marketing orientation is a central focus of modern marketing concepts and has received wide attention from both academic scholars and practitioners (*ibid.*).

But what is that? Marketing orientation is about "the implementation of the marketing concept" (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990, p. 1) in order to understand and satisfy customers and other relevant stakeholders (Day, 1994; Narver & Slater, 1990, cited in Naidoo, 2010). Notably, a market orientation focus means an organisation intends to be profitable by being highly responsive to customers and other relevant stakeholders (especially competitors and employees, although not responding to each other the same ways). Shapiro (1988, p. 120, cited in Cadogan & Diamantopoulos, 1995) says a company can be market oriented only if "information on all important buying influences permeates every corporate function". Thus, a customer-centric focus needs to be pervasive in the organisation. However, achieving this for an academic organisation in Finland is particularly challenging. Students are not considered as "customers", and arguably ought not to be considered this way.

The most adopted measure of market orientation developed by Narver and Slater (1990, cited by Naidoo, 2010) suggests that market orientation is defined in terms of an 1) organisation's customer orientation, 2) competitor orientation, and 3) its inter-functional coordination. In Naidoo's comparative study of higher education export readiness in the U.K., Australia and New Zealand (2010), he modified the measurements to better suit the unique aspects of education export in an HE environment and tested them for market orientation. The findings added to Narver and Slater's three elements: 4) export competence, 5) management commitment and 6) export co-ordination. These were proven to contribute to market orientation, and thus to export performance and export readiness. As suggested by Naidoo (ibid.), this implies that market orientation stems from the use of an integrated marketing strategy that addresses the six empirically validated elements. This is the essence of integrated marketing communication. Naidoo's idea of export co-ordination entails an organisation's inter-functional co-ordination and intra-functional co-ordination functions. Therefore five measures of the market orientation, 1) customer-orientation 2) competitor orientation 3) export co-ordination 4) export competence and 5) management commitment are addressed and tested with a two-level examination in this thesis.

Drawing on *The Four Evolutionary Stages of IMC* (APQC, 1998), for this thesis indicators were developed to guide data collection that establishes the degree of organisation integration. Second, a management level test is designed according to Chris Fill's marketing communication planning framework (MCPF). This entails a questionnaire to determine the readiness of the education export management at the University of Tampere and its affiliation company, Finland University Inc., for education export.

In the next part of the analytical framework, integrated marketing communication is treated from different perspectives. In order to reflect the philosophy of integration, instead of looking at IMC separately, it is depicted in relation to marketing communication (MC) and marketing more generally. After that, a holistic definition and appraisal encapsulates the recent research about this concept and the stance taken in this thesis. To reflect our strategic and co-ordinated perspective on managing

marketing communication activities, sections 3.4 and 3.5 describe in detail the two analytical frameworks.

3.2 Locating IMC

Before getting into the concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC), we need to locate IMC in MC, and MC in marketing. Peter Drucker (2007, p. 16) highlighted the importance of marketing when he stated that: “Because its purpose is to create a customer, the business enterprise has two—and only these two—basic functions: marketing and innovation.” Despite the emphasis on marketing and a marketing approach for organisations, marketing is still often more rhetoric than reality in far too many businesses, and that is especially common in not-for-profit institutions such as higher education where the activities are not perceived as businesses and marketing to customers is an unfamiliar notion. This certainly applies to higher education institutions (HEIs) in Finland. A quote from Drucker (ibid.) encapsulates the challenge that is inherent for HEIs that want to adopt or adapt a marketing approach,

When managers speak of marketing, they usually mean the organized performance of all selling functions. This is still selling. It still starts out with ‘our products.’ It still looks for ‘our market.’ True marketing starts out the way Sears starts out—with the customer, his demographics, his realities, his needs, his values. It does not ask, What do we want to sell? It asks, What does the customer want to buy? It does not say, This is what our product or service does. It says, These are the satisfactions the customer looks for, values and needs. (Drucker, 2007, p. 16)

None of this is to imply that the management of the Finnish HEIs are foolish or incompetent. It is only to observe that there is a common tendency that amounts to the most common mistake when marketing plans are being crafted. That mistake is in starting with a focus on the product rather than the customer. This is especially characteristic for non-commercial institutions where marketing is in key respects “a new frontier” and where the general framework is normative in complexion (meaning it is more about moral obligation than market orientation).

Kotler and Armstrong (2010) suggest that today marketing is all and always about creating customer value and building profitable customer relationships. That depends on understanding consumer needs

and wants, deciding which target markets the organisation can serve best (i.e. most competitively), and developing a compelling value proposition by which the organisation can attract, keep, and grow the targeted consumers. As shown in Figure 3 below (*A Model of the Marketing Process*), after the company identifies the target market and decides how it will serve them, managers must develop marketing plans and programmes (a marketing mix) that can actually deliver the intended customer value upon implementation (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). All of this is fairly straightforward and certainly familiar to most managers. The interesting bit is why the practice so often goes astray? The answer in part is that the planning process tends to be overly subjective and not properly analytical due to the influence of self-interested institutional interests that are of little or no importance, actually, to the target customers (Lowe, personal conversation, March, 2014). Again, then, the focus tends to be product-centric rather than customer-centric, even when the organisation is in principle pursuing a focus on the later.

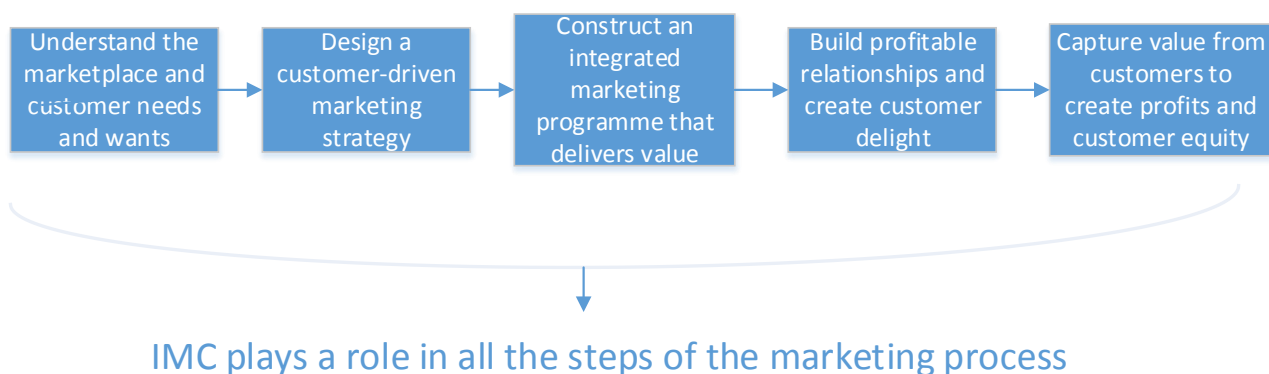


Figure 4: A Simple Model of the Marketing Process. Source: Adopted from Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, p. 29

As Kotler & Armstrong stated,

Marketing mix is a set of tools the firm uses to implement its marketing strategy. The major marketing mix tools are classified into four broad groups, called the four Ps of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. It must decide how much it will charge for the offering (price) and how it will make the offering available to target consumers (place). Finally, it must communicate with target customers about the offering and persuade them of its merits (promotion). (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, p. 36)

Thus, marketing communication is at stage three and four of the overall marketing process – place and promotion. However, there is no universally agreed definition of marketing communications. In this study, following Fill (2005, p. 17), I adopt the following definition and connotations:

Marketing communication is a management process through which an organisation engages with its various audiences. By understanding an audience's communications environment, organisations seek to develop and present messages for its identified stakeholder groups, before evaluating and acting upon the responses. By conveying messages that are of significant value, audiences are encouraged to offer attitudinal and behavioural responses. (Fill, 2005, p. 17)

Moreover, there is no universal definition of IMC. For many, integration is about orchestrating the tools of the marketing communications mix (e.g. Duncan & Everett, 1993, cited in Fill, 2011, p. 116). However, corresponding to the emphasis on the customer relationship, in this thesis the following definition is adopted, again following Fill (2011, p. 116):

IMC is a strategic approach to the planned management of an organisation's communications. IMC requires that organisations coordinate their various strategies, resources and messages in order that it engages coherently and meaningfully with target audiences. The main purpose is to develop relationships with and provoke conversations among audiences that are of mutual value. (Fill, 2011, p. 116)

The merits of adopting Fill's definitions of marketing communication and IMC are perhaps self-evident, but merit brief mention. First, these definitions emphasise management in marketing instead of marketing per se. That is to say, IMC is linked with business level strategies, and the implementation of IMC requires coherence with the organisation wide use of resources and messages. Second, the definitions address the key importance of a market orientation with emphasis on customer data and a co-ordination of internal communications. Third, these definitions reflected the stance this thesis takes, a perspective that IMC is an outside-in strategic co-ordination that emphasises the crucial focus on good planning and proper implementation. Here the strategic dimension of IMC extends to and across all the five steps. That is precisely how IMC is understood and argued in this thesis.

3.3 IMC's origin, supports and criticisms (Appraisal)

Here we attempt to present a holistic appraisal of IMC. Although complex and difficult to summarise in a succinct manner, it is important for the reader to have a clear and fairly concise understanding of the key theoretical premise for this study.

The history of IMC's development justifies advocating a strategic integration dimension of this concept. There have been three phases in the development of IMC. This first was the period where IMC emerged; the second was when bundling the communication tools was appreciated; and the third period is characterised by an advocacy of strategically co-ordinating for both inbound and outbound communications. Although generally appreciated, IMC has also been criticised. This chapter serves two purposes. One is aimed to show how IMC has shifted from an inside-out to an outside-in concept. The second is to offer an appraisal of IMC based on information aggregation and literature review.

3.3.1 Phase one: The emergence of IMC, from specification to juxtaposition

In the early 1980s practitioners and academics within the field of marketing considered each tool of the promotional mix more or less independently and conceived the marketing communication function as separate, individualistic methods to deliver particular messages to particular audiences (Fill, 2005; Kitchen, et al., 2004). Most companies were divided into departments and divisions that operated as relatively autonomous silos. Thus, the theory and practice of advertising, sales promotion, public relations and so on were discussed separately as individual disciplines in ways that failed to recognise or prioritise their interdependence for practice (Kitchen, et al., 2004).

Coulson-Thomas (1983, cited in Kitchen, 2004) first emphasised the crucial importance of interrelationships between the various communication specialities in order to grow understanding of their capabilities when treated interdependently. However, the idea of integration was not considered as a possible approach to developing more effective campaigns at that time. This, according to Fill (2005, p. 296), resulted in a proliferation of advertising agencies and the development of sales promotion houses that were all specialised but not working collaboratively or to any shared ends.

Public relations specialists stood off from any direct association with marketing. Personal selling evolved as a discrete function within organisations.

In the year 1989, the investment firm Shearson-Lehman Hutton (1989, cited in Percy, 2011, pp. 5 - 6) issued a detailed report on consumer advertising, with special emphasis on diversification into areas that would lead to integration. They concluded that a number of changes at work in the marketplace would force traditional packaged goods marketers to take a much more integrated approach to marketing. They noted that high-involvement products (e.g. cruise vacations in their case, or in ours education programmes) where the selling task is more complicated were at that time more suited to the use of integrated marketing strategies. In other words, the more consequential the decision for the customer, the more an integrated approach matters. In general, the report concluded that “the dynamics were in place for a surge in demand for integrated communications from all kinds of advertisers” (ibid.), a conclusion that has since been demonstrated in practice.

3.3.2 Phase two: inside-out IMC and appreciation of juxtaposition

Schultz (1993a, 1993b), another early writer in this area, recognised that IMC had become “one of the hottest topics in the whole marketing arena” (cited in Kitchen et al., 2004) in the early 1990s. In the same year, Schultz (1993c, cited in Percy, 2011, p.6) published perhaps the first book to deal with the subject Integrated Marketing Communication. Schultz and his colleagues talked about IMCs as a new way of looking at the whole where once we only saw parts such as advertising, public relations, sales promotions, purchasing, employee communications and so forth (Schultz et al., 1993, cited in ibid.). The main argument which underpinned their observation was that professional communicators have always been condescendingly amused that consumers call everything advertising or public relations. So IMC was seen by them as “realigning communications to look at it in the way the consumer sees it, as a flow of information from indistinguishable resources” (ibid.). This might be the start of addressing the customer relationship in IMC.

Notably, the widely-used marketing communication text book *Marketing Communications: A European Perspective* by Pelsmacker et al. (2010) for example, still explains IMC this way. Moreover,

the guru of marketing subject Kotler (2003, cited in Percy, 2011, p.8) put the matter in exact those terms when he defines IMC. However, it seemed that implementing IMC in organisations as a strategic approach to co-ordinate different functions across the organisation was more difficult than the theorists had imagined.

Duncan and Everett (1993, cited in Percy, 2008, p. 7) were the first to define IMC as a strategic tool and to consider brand value as the objective of IMC. In their studies, they asked communication and marketing managers from companies (not advertising agencies or other marketing communication suppliers) how valuable they thought IMC was or could be. The mean answer was a strong 1.76 (1 indicates “very valuable” and 5 indicates “not at all valuable”). Yet after a few years, according to Prenskey and his colleagues (1996, cited in Percy, 2008, p. 7), companies had not yet really begun to put in place the organisational structures needed to implement IMC programmes. So although the concept made good sense and was generally accepted, it was proving difficult to implement despite the large desire for IMC.

3.3.3 Phase three: outside-in IMC

The next phase was characterised by an exploration of the nature, direction and content typified by definitions that introduced management, strategy and brand development into the IMC process (Fill, 2005, p. 304). Although these managerial elements were seen in the second phase as a logical focus (e.g. Schultz 1993a), in this phase they have been taken a great deal further.

According to Kitchen et al. (2004), by 2002, IMC was no longer just an inside-out device for bringing promotional mix elements together, but rather one associated with management and with brands. It is worthwhile to revisit Schultz’s vision in 1993 (1993a, cited in Kitchen et al, 2004), because he recognised the necessity for IMC to move beyond the stage of being an outbound communication process to evolve into a fully strategic process. The following citation very much captured the process of an outside-in approach for IMC.

IMC is the process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communications programmes with customers and prospects over time. The goal of IMC is to influence or directly affect the behaviour of the selected communications audience. IMC considers all sources of brand or company contacts which a customer or prospect has with the product or service as potential delivery channels for future messages. In sum, the IMC process starts with the customer or prospect then works back to determine and define the forms and methods through which persuasive communications programmes should be developed.. (Shultz, 1993a, p. 17, cited in Kitchen et al., 2004)

This quotation demonstrates that IMC is driven by the buyers or potential buyers instead of the internal needs of organisations. However, the self-critical authors (Kitchen & Shultz, 1999, cited in Kitchen, 2004) conducted a comparison study in several countries. In which they found that this definition was supported by most respondents, but it was not strongly embraced, although all respondents agreed that companies should be integrated in terms of communication. Evidently it has been more difficult in practice than in theory to convince managers to fully accept the need for an outside-in approach to marketing. Notably, IMC is different from other customer-centric processes in that its foundation is communication (Duncan, 2002, cited in Kitchen, 2004). Communication is regarded as the centre of all relationships. Although controversially received at first, this study by Duncan has become largely influential, and Fill's definition which is adopted in this thesis (Fill, 2011, p. 116) reflects Duncan's ideology.

3.3.4 Critical analysis of IMC: a suitable approach for HEIs?

Since this field of study is still in its introductory or relatively early growth stage (Kliatchko, 2008, Han & Schultz, 2004), it is not surprising that the topic that has dominated research studies in IMC from its inception in 1990s to 2006 has to do with the definitions, perceptions, understanding and theoretical foundations. In other words, as with all new fields there has been strong emphasis on developing the taxonomy. Next to definitional issues, the practice and implementation of IMC in organisations, as well as the conflicts, disagreements and opposing views on IMC, were topics that drew much interest from academics from the mid-1990s to the present (Kliatchko, 2008). As discussed already, the key disagreement continues to be about the degree to which IMC ought to be outside-in versus inside-out in orientation and approach.

It is noted that many writers, such as Kitchen (1997) and Shultz (1998), and Duncan (2002) have advocated ideas about IMC, whereas other authors such as Cornelissen and Lock (2000), Percy et al. (2001), and Spotts et al. (1998) to name a few, have raised criticisms and have doubted the merits inherent in the concept (Fill, 2005, p. 304). The limitation of this concept entails many aspects, although according to Fill (2011, p.117), general opinion suggests that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. As stated earlier, database technology and the Internet have provided great impetus for organisations to review their communications and to implement moves to install a more integrated communication strategy.

The first critique, probably the most profound one, comes from the public relation sector (Miller & Rose, 1994; Moriarty, 1994, cited in Kliatchko, 2008). According to Kitchen et al. (2004), at the very beginning when the IMC concept was initiated, advertising educators were in favour of IMC, seeing it as the best of both worlds, academia and practitioners. Public relations educators, on the other hand, tended to be vehemently opposed (Miller & Rose, 1994, cited in Kitchen et al., 2004). The PR field considered IMC a form of marketing imperialism (Dozier & Lauzen, 1990, cited in *ibid.*). Grunig and Grunig (1998, cited in Kliatchko, 2008) claimed that most IMC adherents view public relations with a biased and narrow perspective, where PR was merely a technical support instead of a management function. Wightman (1999, cited in Kitchen et al., 2004) assumed that IMC was only an excuse for advertising agencies to engulf public relations to deal with reductions in client budgets for mass communications.

However, Miller and Rose's research with advertising and public relations practitioners shows that the previously held opposition to integration by public relations professionals had begun to dissolve as the more enlightened agencies see it as "a reality and a necessity" (Miller & Rose, 1994, cited in Fill, 2011, p. 127; Kitchen et al., 2004). Moriarty (1994, cited in *ibid.*) as well argued in his article *PR and IMC: The Benefits of Integration* that public relations had much to contribute as well as benefit from IMC thinking. At any rate, it is clear that this critique is largely explained by the self-interested concerns of PR specialists who fear that IMC could displace their importance.

Later on, the second critique appeared when large amount of studies were done attempting to conceptualise IMC in late 1990s and early 2000s. Although Schultz (1993a, 1993b, cited in Kitchen et al., 2004) called IMC “one of the hottest topics”, he questioned whether or not IMC was just another managerial fad—a question that has been reiterated many times since. It was argued by Cornelissen and Lock (2000, p. 9, cited in Kitchen et al., 2004), for example, that “On the basis of the observation that IMC as a theory is quite shallow through its lack of definition, formal theory construction, and research, the hypothesis emerges that IMC is a management fashion.” They also doubted IMC’s theoretical robustness as well as its actual significance for marketing and advertising thought and practice. They viewed IMC as “simple rhetoric” (ibid.). Of course this is not uncommon as a criticism of something new and in development. Theory is often immature because it can only realise maturity on the basis of empirical research about the phenomenon in practice (Lowe, personal conversation, March, 2014).

Nevertheless, even IMC’s adherents, such as Kitchen and Schultz (2000), agree that IMC is not yet a theory and currently lacks a formal agreed-upon definition and little has been done to resolve the fact that the theoretical concept of IMC remains vague and uncertain. They (Kitchen & Schultz, 2000) rebutted, however, by arguing that Cornelissen and Lock’s citations were “selected and incomplete” by focusing almost completely from inside the public relations discipline. Moreover, they argued (Kitchen & Schultz, 2000a) that IMC itself was in a pre-paradigm stage of development and thus not bound by an accepted definition. This view was supported by other scholars, such as Gould (2000, cited in ibid.).

However, the biggest concern in this study is the compatibility of IMC to UTA, as a public sector organisation, particularly when it is involved in a joint business venture by owning one-third of the education export company Finland University Inc.. Both literature and the practitioners suggest that IMC is pertinent to and important for non-profit organisations (e.g. Henley, 2001; Edmiston-Strasser, 2009; Perkins, Algren & Eichhorn, 2010). Increasingly, non-for-profit organisations are using

university resources and hiring agencies to make integrated marketing communication plans⁹, because, as stated earlier, IMC strategies help build relationships. As Weir and Hibbert (2000) discovered, non-profit organisations benefit from creating long-term relationships with supporters.

To conclude this chapter, the original ideas (Schultz, 1993a) in general approach to IMC are intuitively appealing and appear to be of value. Communications ought to be integrated and marketing needs to be strategically conceived. Looking at everything from a customer-centric perspective is crucial for competitive success today. However it is undoubtedly true that IMC has yet to become a mature marketing theory, as evident in the debates. In this light, it is absolutely important to recognise the advantages and disadvantages of IMC (Fill, 2011, p. 118),

Advantages of IMC

- *Provides opportunities to cut communication costs and/or reassign budgets*
- *Has the potential to produce synergistic and more effective communications*
- *Can deliver competitive advantage through clearer positioning*
- *Encourages coordinated brand development with internal and external participants*
- *Provides for increased employee participation and motivation*
- *Has the potential to cause management to review its communication strategy on a periodic basis, and from a critical perspective*
- *Requires a change in culture that fosters a customer oriented focus*
- *Provides a benchmark for the development of communication activities*
- *Can lead to a cut in the number of agencies supporting a brand*

Disadvantages of IMC

- *Encourages centralisation and formal/bureaucratic procedures*
- *Can require increased management time in seeking agreement from all involved parties*
- *Suggests uniformity and prefers a single message*
- *Tendency to standardisation might negate or dilute creative opportunities*
- *Global brands can be restricted in terms of local adaptation*
- *Normally requires cultural change from employees and this encourages resistance*
- *Has the potential to severely damage a brand's reputation if incorrectly managed*
- *Can lead to mediocrity as no single agency network has access to all sources of communications (Fill, 2011, p. 118)*

⁹ Such agencies are for example the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society at Vancouver, Canada, and St. Bonaventure University, the US. They did IMC plans for the Centre for Community Organisations and Trading Post Community Care Centre respectively.

Regardless of the disputes over the definition and conceptualisation of IMC, it is sufficient and necessary to translate market orientation into operations. The capacity to implement is crucial in this thesis because it indicates the organisation's state of export readiness and capacity for success in export performance. Notably, a simple bundling strategy of communication tools (i.e. inside-out IMC) does not reflect the multiple dimensions of market orientation (e.g. inter-function co-ordination, customer orientation, management commitment). Only by pursuing a customer-focused approach to strategic management (i.e. outside-in IMC) can an organisation achieve the synergy and effectiveness for both inbound and outbound communications that are vital for competitive success.

Nevertheless, one must acknowledge that disadvantages do exist and will certainly multiply if IMC is managed and implemented improperly. On the other hand, without IMC the organisation risks potentially catastrophic failures when entering the unavoidably complicated, highly competitive and therefore risky practice of an export business. This is so for profit businesses, and even so for non-for-profit businesses. It is necessary to acknowledge that fact that however popular IMC is, proper implementation requires organisational culture changes, high management commitment and customer-centric ideologies no matter in a commercial company or a non-commercial public organisation like UTA.

The next two sections provide detailed descriptions of the two IMC models used for the macro- and micro-level of investigations. From these descriptions, two instruments are developed for empirical data collection. For the macro-level study, semi-structured interview questions are created to reflect the four IMC integration levels from APQC's *The Four Evolutionary Stages of IMC*. Further on, the Chris Fill's *Marketing Communication Planning Framework* (MCPF) is refined into a checklist questionnaire to determine the readiness of management in education export.

3.4 Levels of Integration for Organisation Readiness Analysis

The American Productivity and Quality Centre (APQC, cited in e.g. Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 22)¹⁰ first proposed *The Four Evolutionary Stages of IMC* (Figure 5) in their “Integrated Marketing Communication: Best Practices Report”. This research was the first systematic study to benchmark best practices in IMC studies (Edmiston-Strasser, 2009; Schultz & Schultz, 2004). Participating companies in this study were not ad agencies that were focused on deploying such efforts, but rather organisations that were actually employing IMC. These 23 companies and organisations in the study operated in different industries (e.g. computers, government, military, machinery, petroleum, oil, gas and transportation). They include significant firms in the USA, such as Dow Chemical, Ernst & Young, Texas Utilities, Public Service Electric and Gas Company, Federal Express, Fidelity Investments and Prudential Insurance, just to name a few. Fifteen sponsor companies (i.e. supported the study) were benchmarked against 8 “best practice” companies.

As Schultz and Schultz (2004, p. 22) note that the study was based on a small number of non-random respondents. Its results, therefore, are based on a qualitative assessment of overall findings rather than on statistical analysis of quantitative data. Generalisability is an issue, but given the size and influence of the firms (mainly Fortune 500) the findings are likely to find relevance more broadly (even if that cannot be measured). The APQC best practices study amassed a substantial amount of information not previously known about the implementation of IMC and is therefore highly relevant to our study in this thesis.

The research team observed how the model (Figure 5, see Appendix 2) worked in several of its benchmarked “best practice” companies (Schultz & Schultz, 2004; Edmiston-Strasser, 2009). As demonstrated in the figure, the first step toward becoming integrated is to coordinate IMC at the tactical level. At this stage, the primary focus is on the external communication of the brand. Thus, there is no mention of a customer-oriented approach at this stage. The second level expands to a redefinition of the scope of marketing communication, where a customer focus is essential and the

¹⁰ “Integrated Marketing Communication: Best Practices Report,” American Productivity and Quality Centre (Houston: APQC, 1998). APQC is an American-based, nonprofit, membership organization that conducts benchmarking studies across a wide variety of business processes.

marketing communication activities encompass internal marketing as well. The third stage is focused on utilising the information technology to collect and store customer data, and to increase the information flow between employees, distributors and suppliers. The fourth stage is about financial and strategic integration. Customer data is used at the highest levels to generate measurable and behavioural ROI (return on investment).

That study was not applied to academics, however. A research project done by Dawn M. Edmiston-Strasser some years later (2009) proved that IMC is practiced and valued across a diverse range of colleges and universities in America, not only among companies and corporations. Here we draw on both studies to apply lessons learned to HEIs. The following findings are demonstrated under the title of each stage are of benchmarking value.

Stage 1: Coordination of Tactical Communication Efforts

Schultz and Schultz (2004, p. 23) found that “Integration requires a high degree of interpersonal and cross-functional communication within the organisation, across business units, and with outside suppliers¹¹”. As illustrated in the figure above, various techniques were used in the studied companies to achieve integration. “Communication policies” were particularly emphasised by both the APQC and Schultz & Schultz (2004). APQC (1992, cited in *ibid.*, p. 23) found that “virtually all participating companies used some form of written policies, manuals, or procedural guidelines to achieve consistency and integration in their communication”. Having such tools in place does not guarantee a successfully integrated outcome, of course, but the best practice companies consider it vital to meet the minimum standard for the best practice in IMC (*ibid.*). Thus, any HEI lacking this has a problem in the foundation of their IMC plans.

However, as APQC discovers (1992, cited in Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 23) “best practice companies place much greater emphasis on the use of meetings and other forms of direct, personal communication in fostering IMC programmes”. In short, they are competent in using meetings productively, and to communicate effectively with other areas of the organisation, especially

¹¹ Outside suppliers stand for ad agencies, public relations firms, direct marketing providers, media experts, and so on.

including development, sales and customer service. A further organisational characteristic, as they noted (APQC, 1992, cited in *ibid.*), is “the extent to which best practice partners expect their agencies and other marketing service suppliers to attend these cross-functional planning meetings”. Several influential research studies (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, pp. 20—35) have supported APQC’s findings. All agree that the best practice firms “maintain control over the integration process themselves as a function of the marcom (marketing and communication) department, while orchestrating the work of multiple agencies, public relations firms, direct marketing providers, media experts, and so on” (*ibid.*).

On that basis, three indicators of best practice in IMC are recommended for research in this thesis:

- *Indicator 1: There is a written form of communication policy concerning marketing communication activities (including education export related activities).*
- *Indicator 2: The marcom department uses cross-functional meetings and other form of direct, personal communication in fostering IMC programmes.*
- *Indicator 3: The marcom department controls over the integration process.*

Stage 2: Redefining scope of marketing communication

This stage signifies a shift in the emphasis of IMC-focused firms, from simple tactical coordination to outside-in marketing communication activities (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 24). A customer-centric perspective becomes crucial. Surveyed best practice organisations expanded their view of marketing communication to include more than outbound messages sent to customers (*ibid.*). APQC study (*ibid.*, p.27) gathered extensive information in the planning, development, and evaluation of communication activities. The extensive information incorporates a variety of data on customers and prospects.

All best practice companies are reported to use pre- and post-communication research. A majority of them used primary attitudinal data and perceptual research, geographic and demographic data, historical behaviour and transaction data, customer satisfaction survey data and sales and revenue reports (APQC, 1998, cited in Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 26). These organisations also create a variety of feedback channels for gathering information about customers from customers; they then use this customer feedback and share it throughout the company.

One of the most difficult challenges of integration was identified by the surveyed organisations: The question of effective internal marketing and conveying the firm's marketing mission to the employees. In stage 1, the integration efforts are mainly within the marketing communication department, whereas an outside-in approach implies an alignment of the whole companies' entire internal practices and processes with promises conveyed to customers through external communication programmes (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 27). Therefore, the employees *outside* the marketing communication department play crucial roles in sustaining that customer dialogue and ensuring successful performance. This was especially important because the researchers found that very few best practice companies had enough success in extending marketing communication to internal audiences (APQC, 1998, cited in Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 27).

Thus, two more indicators of best practice in IMC are recommended for research in this thesis:

- *Indicator 4: The organisation gathers a variety of data on customers and prospects (e.g. use of feedback channels) for planning, development and evaluation of communication activities.*
- *Indicator 5: The organisation conveys the export company's marketing mission to the employees (i.e. Internal Marketing). This entails 1) customer data are shared throughout the organisation, and 2) the whole company's internal practice is aligned for delivering the promise that has been conveyed to the customer.*

Stage 3: Application of Information Technology

Following closely on Stage 2, the third stage of IMC development requires that organisations use the power and potential of information technologies to realise customer databases, marketing communication management, and the internal cross-functional communications (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 28). As revealed by APQC study, "Leading best practice organisations maintain a greater number of data sources, and their marketing communication personnel have greater access to the data for planning marketing communication programmes than do the sponsor organisations" (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 28). As noted earlier, surveyed organisations typically capture and maintain substantial amounts of customer information. Unfortunately, in many cases, those data are not available to the marketing communication group (marcom, for short), or at least not for timely access (ibid.). Moreover, simply having extensive data on customers and prospects does not ensure

integration. Study by APQC (1998, cited in *ibid.*, p. 29) found that the best of the best practice companies have developed a sophisticated infrastructure of analysts, statisticians, and researchers to support the process of understanding customer economics.

Certainly research results (APQC, 1998, cited in *ibid.*) suggest there is considerable room for improvement in terms of using finance-base approaches to targeting and segmentation. Typically, they do not project a customer's long-term profitability to the organisation, and they hardly know the cost to acquire/retain a customer, so these data are not used in developing communication budgets.

This suggests three additional indicators of best practice in IMC for research in this thesis:

- *Indicator 6: The organisation captures and maintains customer databases (e.g. CRM), and the marcom staff have timely access to them.*
- *Indicator 7: The organisation has adequate infrastructure for understanding the customers.*
- *Indicator 8: The organisation always projects a customer's long-term profitability to the organisation, and it knows the cost to acquire and retain a customer.*

Stage 4: Financial and Strategic Integration

At this stage, as observed by Schultz and Schultz (2004, p. 30), "IMC is concerned much more with the issues facing senior management than those facing the marketing communication group". That said, "it is apparent that marketing communication managers must develop more strategic views of what they do and how they invest the firm's finite resources" (*ibid.*). Therefore, the focus in Stage 4 is on issues of strategic importance to the firm, especially investments and returns on marketing communication programmes. To manage this, systems and processes to measure the effectiveness of communication activities are needed. In APQC's words (1998), "those companies that archived Stage 4 represented the leading edge of IMC at the time the study was conducted". Most likely, "those same companies are ahead of the game today, too" (*ibid.*).

One key indicators of integration at this stage is the role or visibility of the marketing communication department within an organisation (APQC, 1998, cited in Schultz & Schultz, 2004). According to APQC's study (1998, cited in McGoon, 1999), the marcom departments at the best practice firms often have bottom-line responsibilities and a more prominent role in strategic planning and new

product introductions. In these companies, customer data is used at the highest levels to help formulate strategic direction. Marcom staff is deeply involved in product development and is considered an essential component to strategic planning (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 31). However, the financial contribution of marketing communication is not thoroughly understood or incorporated in the strategic planning of many firms. It is not clearly related to and evaluated on the basis of financial returns. Worse, there is not a system for analysing the financial impact of marcom in the firms (APQC, 1998, cited in Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. 31).

Thus, two final indicators of best practice in IMC are recommended for research in this thesis:

- *Indicator 9: The marcom department has high visibility, and a prominent role in strategic planning and new product introduction.*
- *Indicator 10: The organisation measures financial returns on marcom programmes (i.e. the effectiveness).*

Kitchen and his colleagues (2004) argued that “the real weakness of IMC is the weakness of firms to invest resources in the marketing and communication process”. If that investment is not made, then businesses will find themselves anchored at the dock of Stage 1 or Stage 2. “Indeed, IMC will have made a contribution, but it is not one of a strategic nature. It is tactical.” Additionally, as recorded in Schultz and Schultz’s book *IMC—The Next Generation* (2004, pp. 32—33), respondents in the APQC’s study were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statement “Compensation and promotion policies have been reviewed for alignment and consistency with corporate customer development objectives.” Only less than a quarter of firms could agree “somewhat” or “strongly” with this statement, indicating that for many firms there was still a significant level of non-integration between internal policies and what the organisation attempts to convey to customers. This is certainly a critical barrier to the successful implementation of IMC programmes.

Adopting the four stages integration framework by APQC in our thesis study does not mean that other conceptual levels of integrations are left out. For example, as cited in Pelsmacker et al. (2010, pp. 35—36), Duncan and Caywood (1996) suggested a seven-level schema of integration. In the schema marketing communications efforts are integrated in the first five levels, and corporate communications are integrated into one system of relationship marketing with marketing

communications in the last two levels. However, these conceptual levels of integration fail to address a customer-centric focus and also underplay the financial and business level of integration. APQC's framework captures the key elements that indicate an organisation's market orientation, reflecting the strategic focuses earlier discussed in Fill's definition of IMC (Fill, 2011, p. 116). It stresses the role of management, inter-functional co-ordination, and customer data-driven decision-making. Thus, this approach is more appropriate for grounding our study, and for guiding the data collection for the macro-level of this research.

3.5 IMC Planning Framework for Management Readiness Analysis

In the last section, we laid out the incremental integration model of IMC for the investigation of UTA's organisation readiness in education export. Ten best practice indicators refined out of previous studies (particularly one on the U.S. public HEIs by Edmiston-Strasser, 2009) are benchmarks that will guide the data collection. In this section, the focus is a demonstration of the marketing communication planning framework from which a checklist of management considerations necessary in the UTA's education export schema will be developed.

Getting from strategy to implementation requires attention to a number of structural, personnel, and resource issues. Any successful strategy must be formed around a coherent and reinforcing set of supporting practices and structures. Most people call this *alignment* (Harvard business essentials, 2005, pp. 64—75). The foundation of alignment is communication. Stimulating and enabling communication among many groups should be the outcome of alignment, which ensures success in implementation. A tool answering to these responsibilities is a marketing communications plan. In this thesis we use Chris Fill's Marketing Communication Planning Framework (MCPF, see Figure 6) which represents a sequence of decisions that marketing managers undertake when preparing, implementing and evaluating communication strategies and plans.

There are other IMC planning processes proposed by other authors, such as Pelsmacker et al. (2010, 2005) as well as Kotler and Armstrong (2010), but all approaches start out with "selecting the target audience". That is important, obviously, but fails to address the strategic integration considerations.

Therefore, this thesis adopts Chris Fill's MCPF where an organisation's marketing communication strategy and tactics are addressed in an integrated manner.

Next, each elements of the MCPF is considered respectively. These elements constantly reinforce a rational and outside-in mindset in decision making. They represent an extensive range of considerations management needs to go through before taking actions. Since management commitment plays a key role in deciding an organisation's readiness in export projects, at the micro-level of this study we aimed to test the management readiness. A questionnaire (See Appendix 1) was developed to achieve this and it is based on the descriptions below. These descriptions also provide a base for analysis in later chapters.

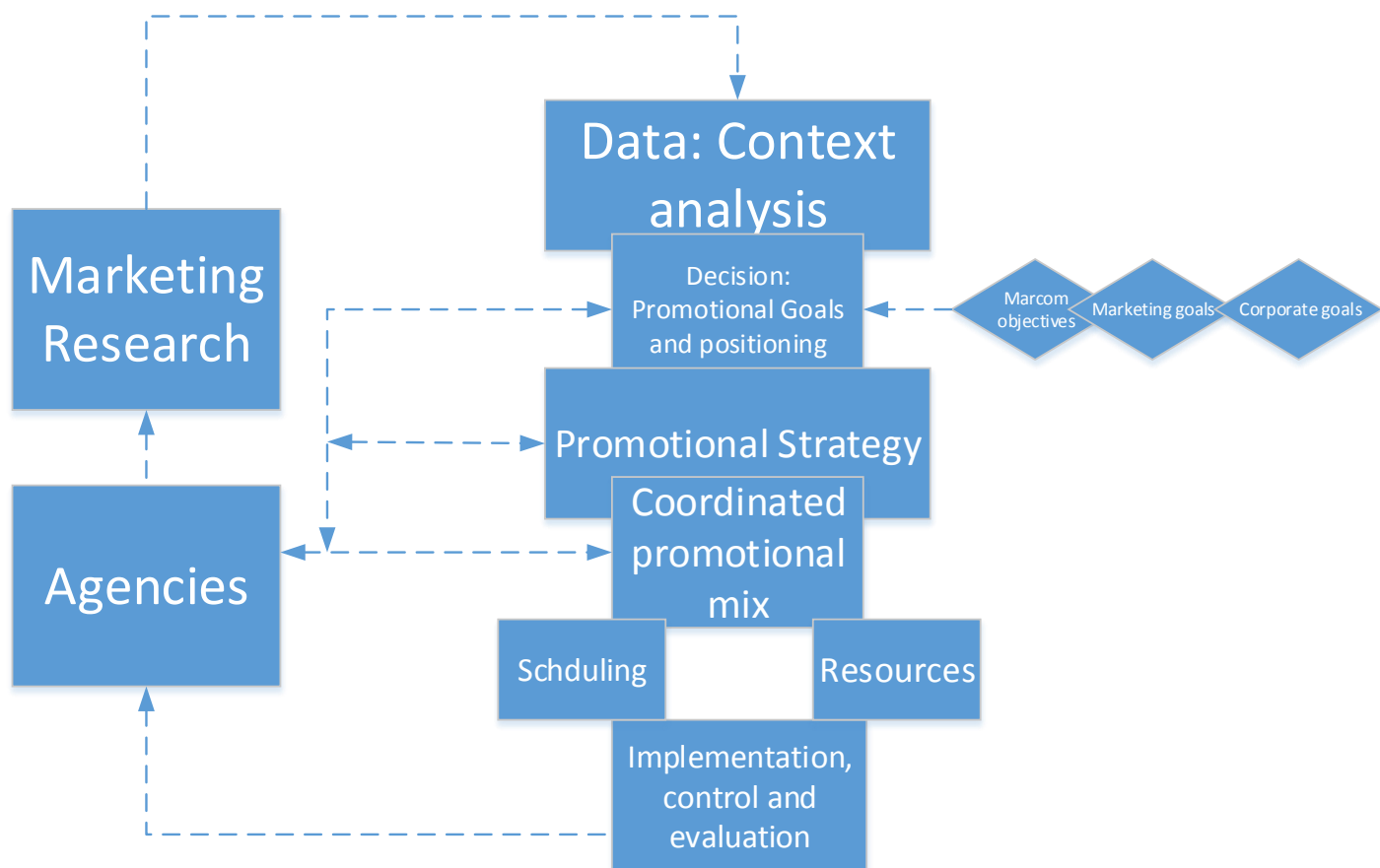


Figure 6: Marketing Communication Planning Framework. Source: Adopted from Fill, 2005, p. 347

Context analysis

Many believe that strategy begins with goals (Harvard Business Essential, 2005, pp 2—15). But for practical purposes goals cannot stand in isolation. They are informed by an iterative sensing of the

external environment and the organisation's internal capabilities. However, it is necessary to distinguish a situation analysis (typically SWOT) and a communication-focused Context Analysis (CA). CA analysis is aimed at understanding the key market and communication *drivers* that are likely to influence or already are influencing a brand or organisation, thus either help or hinder its progress towards meeting its long-term goals (Fill, 2011, p. 131). Whereas a situation analysis considers a range of wider organisational factors, most of which are normally considered in the development of marketing plans (ibid.) and SWOT is more generic and does not go as far as CA.

Notably, at the root of the CA is a marketing plan that contains important information about the target segment, the business and marketing goals, competitors and the time-scales on which the goals are to be achieved. SWOT has nothing to offer here. In CA, duplication is to be avoided because it is inefficient and confusing (Fill, 2011). The rest of in CA seeks to elaborate and build on the resulting information to provide the detail in order that is needed for the plan to be thoroughly developed and justified. Therefore CA provides the rationale for the plan. It is from the CA that the marketing communications objectives are derived. The type, form and style of the message are rooted in the characteristics of the target audience, and the media selected to convey messages will be based upon the nature of the tasks, the media habits of each audience and the resources available to handle all of this. The main elements of CA are presented in the Table 1.

Context element	Dimensions
The customer context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Segment characteristics • Levels of awareness, perception and attitudes towards the brand/organisation • Level of involvement • Types of perceived risk • DMU characteristics and issues
The business context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate and marketing strategy and plans • Brand/organisation analysis • Competitor analysis
The internal context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial constraints • Organisation identity • Culture, values and beliefs • Marketing expertise • Agency availability and suitability
The external context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the key stakeholders and why are they important? • What are their communication needs? • Social, political, economic and technological restraints and opportunities.

Table 1: The Main Elements of the Context Analysis. Source: adopted from Fill, 2011, p. 131.

Marketing communication objectives

These objectives will determine which is the right communications and media mix and, consequently, have key role in message and strategy development, budgeting and effectiveness research issues. Ideally, these objectives should be threefold (Fill, 2011, p. 132). However, Fill fails to elaborate the multiple dimensions of communication objectives. Pelsmacker and his colleagues (2010, pp. 164—176) on the other hand dedicated the whole chapter in their book to the communications goals.

Corporate objectives are derived from the business or marketing plan. They refer to the mission and the business areas the organisation believes it should be in (Fill, 2011, p. 132). *Marketing objectives* are derived from the marketing plan are output oriented. Normally these can be considered as sales-related objectives, such as market share, sales revenues, volumes, return on investment (ROI) and profitability indicators (ibid.). *Communication objectives* are derived from an understanding of the current context in which a brand exists and the future context where the brand is expected to be situated at some point, typically in the near future (Fill, 2011, p. 132). The choice of communication

goals depends upon the tasks that need to be accomplished. The communication effects or goals that are distinguished in the DAGMAR (Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results) model are shown in Table 2 below. This model was first published in 1961 by Russell Colley (Pelsmacker et al., 2010, p. 165).

The DAGMAR model is frequently used as a framework to define communication goals. According to the model, during the communications process 9 effects can be established. Every promotional campaign should be organised with one of these communications objectives in mind. The choice of the right goals depends on the problems that have arisen in the preliminary context analysis of market, brand positions, competition, opportunities and threats. In that sense, communication objectives are only an intermediary way to reach marketing goals of a higher order, such as sales volumes, market share, distribution penetration, etc.

Category need
Brand awareness
Brand knowledge/comprehension
Brand attitude
Brand purchase intention
Purchase facilitation
Purchase
Satisfaction
Brand loyalty

Table 2: The DAGMAR Model. Source: Pelsmacker et al., 2010, p. 165.

Marketing communication strategy

As revealed by Fill (2011, p. 91), it is assumed by many authors (e.g. Kotler & Armstrong, 2005; Pelsmacker et al., 2010) that marketing communication strategy is simply the combination of tools in the communications mix. They mostly regard strategy as deciding the degree of direct marketing, personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and public relations that is incorporated in a planned set of marketing communication activities. A truly strategic perspective, however, implies key decisions in the overall direction of the programme and its target audiences, the fit between corporate strategy and marketing strategy, and the desired positioning of one or more brands in the market.

Marketing communication strategy should support the marketing strategy, which in turn ought to complement the corporate or institutional strategy. Very often instead marketing communications puts the cart in front of the horse. For example (Fill, 2011, p. 95), the corporate strategy might embody core values that stress the importance of care and respect for all stakeholders. The marketing strategy could complement this by developing customer service and customer retention plans to support achieving care and respect for all stakeholders. The marketing communication strategy could embody this by focusing messages on customer service and support, care and responsiveness, loyalty and values programmes.

Marketing communication strategy is concerned with two key dynamics, audience and positioning. The prevailing approach to MC strategy has featured an interpretation of the promotional mix and hence the resources an organisation deployed. In other words, a production-centric approach rather than a market orientation to marketing communication, a strategy that is intrinsically inside-out and resource-driven. A proper market orientation to strategy instead requires deep and continuous consideration of the needs of audiences – first and foremost, always (Fill, 2011, p. 96). Positioning is about distinguishing a brand from competitors and provides visibility and recognition of what a product or service represents to an intended buyer.

Three main marketing communication strategies have been identified: 1) pull-positioning, 2) push-positioning and 3) profile-positioning. These are sometimes referred to as the 3Ps of marketing communications strategy. Push and pull relate to the direction of communication flow relative to the marketing channel: either pushing communications down through the marketing channel or pulling consumers/buyers into the channel via retailers as a result of receiving communications. Profile refers to the presentation of the organisation as a whole and therefore the identity is said to be profiled for various relevant stakeholders, and thus coherent but not always inherently the same. The communication goal here is therefore about building reputation. (Fill, 2011, pp. 96—104).

One key principle in deploying these MC strategies is to strike a strategic balance among the three positioning strategies. In addition, all the strategies should pursue the tasks of DRIP (differentiate, reinforce, inform/make aware and persuade).

Communication methods

Having formulated, stated and justified the required position, the next step is to present the basic form and style of the key message that is to be conveyed. From this the marketing communication mixes need to be considered for each of the strategies proposed. These mixes are for the communications to reach the wider array of stakeholders. The choice of methods should clearly state the tools and the media to be used. As Fill suggests (2011, p. 133), a short paragraph justifying the selection is very important, as the use of media in particular is to a large extent dependent upon the nature of goals, the target audience and the resources. The key is to provide message consistency and a measure of integration. (Fill, 2011, p. 133)

Scheduling

The next step is to schedule the deployment of the methods and the media. This is best achieved by the production of a Gantt chart. Events should be scheduled according to the goals and the strategic thrust. So, if it is necessary to communicate with the trade prior to a public launch, those activities tied into the push strategy should be scheduled prior to those calculated to support the pull strategy. Similarly, if awareness is a goal then, if funds permit, it may be best to use television and posters first before sales promotions unless sampling is used, direct marketing, point of purchase and personal selling. (Fill, 2011, p. 133)

Resources

This is a vitally important part of the plan but is frequently forgotten. These resources refer not only to the financial issues but also to the quality of available marketing expertise and the time that is available to achieve the required outcomes. Gantt charts and other project planning aids are best used to support this part of the plan. The cost of the media and methods can either be allocated in a right-hand column of the chart, or in a new chart. What is of important is the relative weighting of the costs

and that there is a recognition and understanding of the general costs associated with the proposed individual activities. Notably, the overall cost of the strategy should be in proportion to the size of the client organisation, its probable level of profitability and the size and dynamics of the market in which it operates. (Fill, 2011, p. 133)

Control and evaluation

Chris Fill fails to provide insights of this step of the plan, which is certainly a weakness although understandable given the newness of the approach as earlier discussed. He just briefly states “There are numerous methods to evaluate the individual performance of the tools and the media used” (2011, p. 133). Perhaps so, or maybe not; at any rate, ‘numerous’ might be too strong a term. In strategy implementation, no action plan can guarantee people stay on course, or foresee the many obstacles and changing conditions that people will face over the periods. Thus, midcourse adjustments and management intervention are inevitable and necessary (Harvard Business Essentials, 2005, p. 96). In order to find and fix implementation problems, several tools can be in place to help. To sense the problem, the performance periodic progress reviews, anecdotal reports from people on the scene and direct observation by managers can be deployed. The point is to highlight the need to develop and establish measures in order to monitor progress and identify problems as quickly as possible so the causes can be corrected. Measures do not have to be perfect in scientific terms. It is arguably sufficient if they are proximate.

Contingency plans should be developed to handle potential setbacks that are foreseeable in general terms, at least, and the managers must support the plan with consistent behaviours and messages. Where there is confusion and mixed signals the potential for failure escalates.

Feedback

The feedback provides crucial information to the next context analysis, which anchors subsequent campaigns. As pointed out by Fill (2011, p. 134), information fed back in a formal and systematic manner constitutes an opportunity for organisations to learn from their previous campaign activities. This is often overlooked and neglected.

It is worthwhile to reinforce the importance of the contextual analysis (CA) as a periodic procedure, not a once-and-forever task. The linkages associated with different parts of the MC plans represent the interconnections between different parts of the plan and the CA. The CA justifies the decisions along the way of plan, namely the objectives, strategic balance between push, pull and profile, brand positioning, message content and style, and promotional tolls and media.

It is noted that the framework does not reflect reality. As Fill said (2011), “indeed many marketing decisions are made outside any recognisable framework”. That is to say, this approach is not intended to solve all the problems associated with the formulation of such plans. MCPF is more of a means of understanding the different components, appreciating the way in which they relate to one another and bringing various aspects for work, and ensuring that nothing crucial for success is overlooked. According to him, this framework has many advantages and has been used by a number of local, national and international organisations, both commercial and non-commercial.

To briefly recap the arguments we have made so far. This thesis research is a reaction to the policy emphasis by the EU and the Finnish government on marketization of HE in Finland. The policy as well as the existing literature suggest the need of an indispensable management competence for the Finnish HEIs to achieve success in education export business, and it is media management. The tool to help the HE management to gain this competence is IMC. IMC holds the key to the organisation’s market-orientation, and thus to the export readiness and successful performance in education export. In the constantly changing global market, export readiness is one of the very few controllable factors that lead to export success. Therefore, successfully implementing IMC gains the HEI an ultimate competitive advantage that is rooted in a solid communication system. To test this system, the two IMC models were introduced in detail in the last two sections. Now we shall continue to data collection with the instruments developed from the models.

4. Methodology

The essential task is to determine “how ready is UTA in terms of marketing communication in education export”? To answer we need a research design that incorporates examination of organisational level integration examination and the level of individual management level readiness. The two-level design is a reflection of triangulation logic. These two levels of investigation complement each other in answering the main research question. The approach to the organisational level is a mix of qualitative methods, including participation observation, documents and artefacts analysis and interview. The approach to the management level of investigation is quantitative, relying on answers to a questionnaire. To verify the findings we conducted a focus group interview after primary data analysis.

This study happened in the context of strategic management intensions to export education to China by the University of Tampere. Our examination is from a marketing communication perspective. Given literature review results, we want to clarify the degree to which an integrated marketing communication approach has been adopted by the University of Tampere’s management. As argued, this is the best approach for realising the highest probabilities for success in export, including education. The findings will have important implications for the future operations of UTA in education export.

4.1 Organisational Integration Data Collection Methods

On the organisational level of investigation, the core purpose is to find out “how integrated the UTA’s marketing communication operations are”, which in turn affects the market orientation of the community and thus the export readiness. This level of research deployed qualitative research methods – participant observation, interviewing, and document and artefact analysis. When designing the interview items, APQC’s Four Revolutionary Stages provided the framework.

This approach differs from positivist and post-positivist methods where quantitative research methods are solely legitimate (positivist) or compulsory in triangulation (post-positivist). The ‘interpretivist’ acknowledges that qualitative methods are more suitable than quantitative methods for addressing certain questions about culture, interpretation and power (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), and also better suited for studies that seek richness in data for a more in-depth understanding of how people are thinking and why they are acting in the ways they demonstrate (Lowe, personal conversation, March, 2014).

“Fundamentally, qualitative researchers seek to preserve and analyse the situated form, content, and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Qualitative research is the broadest and most inclusive term for studying communication phenomena (*ibid.*), which are by their very nature interpretive and subjective. Growing interest among corporations and institutions in the value of qualitative research for product design, programme evaluation and marketing purposes is fuelling its growth (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Baba, 1998, cited in *ibid.*, p. 14).

Of course qualitative research merits critique that should be kept in mind. This type of research is considered as too subjective, difficulty to replicate, of low generalizability, and lack of transparency (Bryman, 2008, pp. 391 – 392). Subjectivity is usually caused by, “the researcher’s unsystematic views about what is significant and important” and/or “the close personal relationships that the researcher frequently strikes up with the people studied” (*ibid.*). With the APQC’s Four Revolutionary Stages of IMC as the framework, this concern can be minimised.

As a case study research design (Bryman, 2008), the subject environment in this research is indeed difficult to replicate. However, the same instruments can and have been used in studying other organisations, as reported earlier. The findings of this study cannot be generalized broadly (Bryman, 2008, p. 391), but the quality of theoretical inferences derived from literature and resulting from our qualitative data is crucial to assess what has generalizability (*ibid.* p. 392).

Lack of transparency is not judged through quantitative research criteria, but rather on the basis of how the research is conducted (ibid.). In the following sub-sections we discuss how the research design worked to minimise this error, and do so by depicting the research process in detail.

4.1.1 Participant observation

The thesis research started in March, 2013 with extensive desk research about the export of education, as well as of higher education management. Because the major emphasis in our work is media management, I was invited to adopt a communication perspective to the investigation of managing education export at UTA. In July 2013, the University of Tampere (UTA) announced a secretary of international education vacancy to assist, among other things, education export to China. As a Chinese national with fluency in Chinese, Finnish and English languages, together with this background in graduate level studies in media management, I applied for and was accepted for the position.

The post took effect on September 1, 2013. Aside from my thesis supervisor, Gregory Ferrell Lowe (Professor of Media Management for the School of Communication, Media and Theatre), this research was greatly assisted by the Director of International Education, and Professor Yuzhuo Cai, one of the founders of Chinese Education, Research and Exchange Centre (CEREC). None of this research was covert. As the secretary of international education, the researcher is responsible for organising meetings related to China co-operation and export of education to China. A personal presence in the meetings was compulsory and recording the meeting minutes was part of my job. To gain familiarity with the tasks and position, I have kept up with the email threads related to China.

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002, p. 4), by participating in the activities of the group, researchers gain insight into the obligations, constraints, motivations, and emotions that members experience as they complete everyday actions. Effective participation—in the sense of being able to act, think, and feel as a true participant would—is thought by many qualitative researchers to be a prerequisite to making effective claims about communication. As an umbrella term covering several activities that are uniquely combined to meet situational needs, then, participant observation is not a single method (Gans, 1999, cited in Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p.4). Instead, it is a strategy of reflexive

learning, and success is dependent on researchers using—and reflecting on—their cognitive and emotional responses to other human beings (Gans, 1982, cited in *ibid.*). Only by living an experience—and then describing and interpreting its significance—can a qualitative researcher make that experience useful to a reader.

4.1.2 Access and researcher identity

According to a classic typology developed by Gold (1958, cited in *ibid.*, p. 144; Bryman, 2008, p. 410), four possible roles can be used to describe the degree of participation: complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer. Judging from the traits of my role in this setting, it is difficult to confine description to one of the above. Complete participant is a fully functioning member of the social setting, but his or her true identity is unknown to the other members. As such, the complete participant is a covert observer (Bryman, 2008, p. 410). That does not apply in this case. The participant-as-observer is an overt role where the researcher is also a fully functioning member and other members are aware of the researcher's status as a researcher (*ibid.*). That applies in our case.

In this study I was open about who I was, although collecting data was not the reason I wanted to be hired or the reason why they hire me. There merits in being somewhere between covert and overt, i.e. in some sense a bit of both. For instance, there was no problem of access the participants are less like to adjust their behaviour because of the researcher's presence. Normally, covert researchers have problems of taking notes, being anxious and having ethical concerns. As secretary it was my job to take notes. I was open about my "double identity" as employee and researcher, and not worried about revealing my intention in data collection.

According to Bryman (2008, p. 406), covert observation transgresses two ethical tenets: it does not provide participants with the opportunity for informed consent and it entails deception. Neither was a problem in this project. All notes were transformed into official meeting minutes and shared among all the participants for comments and alterations. Once accepted by everyone, according to the university's transparency policy, these documents can be called upon and used for development

purposes. Due to the alignment of my job description, assisting in education export, and the research project, there was no threat to ethical requirements and my roles in both aspects were supported by the participants.

However, I did have the problem using other methods, in particular interviewing. Being necessarily limited to the work assignments the secretary was required to deliver made it impossible to participate in all discussions. Neither was it possible to steer conversations or to actively engage in interviewing. On the other hand, this inherently means the researcher was not ‘interfering’ with the phenomena being studied.

The main events and meetings related to the research were recorded as meeting minutes. During the research period there were four CEREC meetings (28 Aug 2013, 29 Aug 2013, 13 Nov 2013, 11 Feb 2014), a China Roundtable Seminar (19 Sept 2013), three Education Export Group meetings (8 Oct 2013, 26 Nov 2013, 14 Jan 2014) and a Strategy-Cross Seminar on Principles of Education Export at the University of Tampere (11 Dec 2013). The participants in these meetings were aware the secretary was a researcher conducting this study as the thesis project to complete a master’s degree.

4.1.3 Documents and artefacts

In addition to the meeting memos the researcher also collected other documents and artefacts. Many relevant materials were circulated inside the organisation during the research period. In particular, these materials included news stories, announcements, memoranda, policy statements, slideshows, minutes of meetings, and research reports. As the secretary, I made some of them, such as news stories, and research reports. This kind of analysis of artefacts (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz & Sechrest, 1966, cited in Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 5) is typically used in qualitative research to support interviewing and participant observation. Of course there is an inherent limitation in analysing materials I personally produced, although effort was made to maintain a self-critical attitude to the extent possible.

Two announcements (Hallintojohtajan päätös) are used in this research:

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- Decision on CEREC-network's new organisational position announced on November 1, 2013
 - Decision on CEREC-network's representatives from the 9 Schools announced on January 22, 2014

One guideline is used as a document to assist in examination of the current stage of internal and external communications at the University of Tampere.

- The Communication Programme of the University of Tampere 2011 –2015 (Tampereen yliopiston viestinnän ohjelma) announced in 2011 (See reference, Tampereen Yliopiston Viestinnän Ohjelma, 2011).

The slideshows used for analysis in this research are as follows:

- *Koulutusvienti osana Suomen korkeakoulutusta ja TaY:n koulutuksen kokonaisuutta – toimintamuotona yhtiöittäminen* made by Education Export Coordinator Ms. Mirka Gustafsson and presented in Strategy-Cross Seminar on December 11, 2013
- *The Current State of Education Export at the University of Tampere* made by Education Export Coordinator Ms. Mirka Gustafsson and presented in CEREC meeting on February 11, 2014

4.1.4 Sampling for organisational readiness

Most qualitative studies are guided by purposeful sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p.122) because the sample is not usually based on procedures that would ensure random probability (in which every element of a population has an equal and independent chance of being selected). This research project was set in a unique and specific social context and generalizability cannot be established. It is fair to claim, however, that the findings are appropriate to describe the general situation for export education in this early period of development in the Finnish universities under examination.

As Schwandt (1997, p. 128, cited in Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 122) rationalises the choice of purposeful sampling: “ Sites and cases are chosen because there may be good reason to believe that ‘what goes on there’ is critical to understanding some process or concept, or to testing or elaborating

some established theory'. The respondents in this study are chosen in this research based on the following criteria:

1. They are employees of the University of Tampere.
2. They are involved in education export (i.e. appeared in meetings and seminars related to education export).
3. For answering certain questions, they are at least middle-level managers.

To meet these criteria, five interviewees were identified. They are:

1. Vice-Rector Professor Harri Melin who is in charge of international affairs for the University of Tampere. He is the chairperson of many steering groups about education export, such as the education export group (EEG), Chinese Education, Research and Exchange Centre (CEREC) and a board member of Finland University Inc.
2. CEO of Finland University Inc., Mr. Pasi Kaskinen, who is an employee of the three partner universities (UTA, UTU and UEF). Based in Helsinki, he visits all three universities periodically to communicate with and inform the stakeholders as the company owners.
3. Co-ordinator of Education Export at the University of Tampere, and one of the three Account Managers of Finland University Inc., Ms. Mirka Gustafsson. She organises the EEG meetings and other information sessions about education export at UTA.
4. Co-ordinator of International Education, Ms. Liisa Ahlava. She was the substitute for Ms. Mirka Gustafsson for one year beginning in August 2013. She is in charge of admission procedures for all international master's programmes at UTA.
5. Head of the Press and Information Office at UTA, Ms. Katja Kannonlahti, whose job includes three main areas: internal communications, external communications and the university's brand management.

4.1.5 Interviewing for organisational readiness

In addition to observing others as secretary, the researcher conducted interviews. This is common as participant observers frequently conduct interviews in the course of their research (Bryman, 2008, p. 402). Based on American Productivity and Quality Centre's (APQC) The Four Evolutionary Stages

of IMC, and inspired by the instrument created by Edmiston-Strasser (2009), ten hypotheses were developed all together for the four stages. In particular the following literature was instrumental to formulating the hypotheses: Schultz and Schultz's (2004) descriptions of APQC's The Four Evolutionary Stages of IMC, Edmiston-Strasser's (2009) IMC adaptation study to the Higher Education sector, and Kitchen, Brignell and Li's (2004) statements of the four stages.

Since the sample size is small, generalizability to other populations is not the purpose of this study. The focus is on fairly assessing the situation in a unique setting and investigating the mechanisms that are in place to fulfil the strategy. Thus, the theoretical inferences that are derived from the data are of crucial significance for the case organisation and for the advancement of pertinent theory. That is why instead of testing the indicators with questionnaires, in-depth interviews were used and can be characterised as respondent interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pp. 178—179). With semi-structured interview questions, the interviews are intended to elicit open-ended responses. The indicators served as benchmarks from which the interview items were developed. Each indicator yields at least one interview item for at least two respondents.

All of interview items were managed in a Windows Excel spreadsheet. This instrument was evaluated and further refined based on feedback from the thesis supervisor, Prof. Gregory F. Lowe. Due to the speciality of each sample in this research, each interview had a formulated guide. The number of interview items varied from one interview guide to another. The variability depend on what the interview was in a position to know. The most was 15 items and the least was 8 items, however in practice follow-up questions were asked as considered useful or necessary during the interviews. Some questions were asked in all the interview guide, some were asked to more than one respondent, and some were asked only to one respondent. All the questions were asked in a similar wording.

Each interview was scheduled at a time convenient to the respondent and at least one week prior to the interview. The interview guide was distributed in advance for each individual. All participates were asked to specify whether or not their answers would be directly attributed. All interviews were face-to-face and took place in the office of each respondent in the sample. The interviews lasted 45

to 75 minutes and they were digitally recorded, except for one informant who refused to be recorded. With the help of notes taken during the interviews, the data were transcribed verbatim. After reading through the transcripts, the passages concerning each hypothesis were configured on the spreadsheet, which then was printed for asides and coding.

A coding technique was used in analysing the empirical data collected for this level of study. Edmiston-Strasser's study (2009), which this study has to some extent referred to, used a scoring system to determine whether U.S. Public Institutions of Higher Education in his study had reached the integration level advocated in APQC's Four Revolutionary Stage. The findings were displayed as qualitative assessments instead of statistical assertions. As recognised by Edmiston-Strasser (2009), "there is a dearth of IMC research relative to HEIs, which prevents replication of past research methods or use of other researcher's questionnaires". Given the circumstances, the study at this level does not aim to yield statistical results but qualitative assessments. However, it does attempt to qualitatively determine the degree to which the case organisation is integrated. In other words, whether UTA has reached a certain stage of integration is "calculated" based on the results of qualitative assessments.

The following indicators were derived from the Analytical Framework Chapter, repeated here to demonstrate the interrelations between the indicator and the interview items.

Stage 1 Coordination of tactical communication efforts

Indicator 1: There is a written form of communication policy concerning marketing communication activities (including education export related activities).

The question "Which communication policies of UTA are important for education export?" was asked to every selected respondents—Professor Harri Melin (refers to as Vice-Rector), Mr. Pasi Kaskinen (refers to as CEO) and Ms. Katja Kannonlahti (refers to as Katja)—to examine the indicator. These managers are decision-makers, if there is no such policy they are aware of, it is pointless to ask the same question to other respondents. As a follow-up question, "Will you or are you making any communication policy concerning education export?" was asked to CEO.

Indicator 2: The marcom department uses cross-functional meetings and other form of direct, personal communication in fostering IMC programmes.

To test indicator 2, the following interview items were asked of the designated respondents:

- Can you describe the process of making marketing decisions in this area? (CEO)
- How would you visualise the communication model among the three universities and the export company? (CEO)
- What is your day to day work like, and what kind of communication activities do you coordinate? (Katja)
- Who are your key cooperation partners? (Katja)
- Could you give me an example of how you cooperate with the internal stakeholders? (Katja)
- What is the normal process of making marketing materials? (Katja)

Indicator 3: The marcom department controls over the integration process.

The interview items designed to test I3 are:

- Who controls for consistency in marketing materials? (Katja)
- Who will be in control over the communication integration process? (CEO)
- To what extend do you outsource the marketing communication activities? (CEO)

Stage 2 Redefining scope of marketing communication

Indicator 4: The organisation gathers a variety of data on customers and prospects (e.g. use of feedback channels) for planning, development and evaluation of communication activities.

These interview items were used for testing this indicator:

- What kinds of customer data are collected? (Katja and Liisa)
- How are the data used? (Katja)
- Do you use these data, or do you know if these data are used, in evaluation, planning and development of communication activities? (Katja)

-
- Please describe the feedback system. (Liisa)

Hypothesis 5: The organisation conveys the export company's marketing mission to the employees (i.e. Internal Marketing). This entails 1) customer data are shared throughout the organisation, and 2) the whole company's internal practice is aligned for delivering the promise that has been conveyed to the customer.

Interview items to testing I5 were:

- What is the current marketing mission? (Katja, Mirka, CEO and Vice-Rector)
- Do we know how aware the UTA community is of the strategy? (Katja, Mirka, CEO and Vice-Rector)
- How well do you think our university is aligned in terms of delivering the promise that has been conveyed through the marketing communication channels? (Vice-Rector, Katja)
- How accessible are the customer data? (Liisa, Katja)

Stage 3 Application of Information Technology

Indicator 6: The organisation captures and maintains customer databases (e.g. CRM), and the marcom staff have timely access to them.

This indicator was studied as follows:

- Do we have databases or CRM system to store the customer data? (Liisa)
- Who are usually the audience of these data? (Liisa)
- Who will have access to the customer database? (CEO, Mirka)

Indicator 7: The organisation has adequate infrastructure for understanding the customers.

One interview item was used to examine this indicator:

- Is there a specialist for data analysis in order to understand the customers? (Mirka, CEO, Liisa)

Indicator 8: The organisation always projects a customer's long-term profitability to the organisation, and it knows the cost to acquire and retain a customer.

These interview items were used:

- How does the company calculate potential profitability? (Mirka)
- Does the company aware of the cost to acquire and retain a customer? (CEO)
- Does the company project a customer's long-term profitability to the organisation? (CEO)
- Do the university project a student's long-term profitability to the organisation? (Liisa)

Stage 4: Financial and strategic integration

Indicator 9: The marcom department has high visibility, and a prominent role in strategic planning and new product introduction.

These items were used in the interviews:

- Do you think our Press and Information Office has high visibility in our university? (Liisa, Mirka, Katja)
- How visible is the Press and Information Office in UTA's strategy? (Vice-Rector)
- Will the Press and Information Office be able to access the CRM system? (Mirka)
- As the director of the Press and Information Office, are you involved in the university's strategic planning? (Katja)
- Are you going to be involved in the new education export programme development? (Katja)

Indicator 10: The organisation measures financial returns on marcom programmes (i.e. the effectiveness).

Here are the items used to investigate I10:

- How are financial returns from marketing efforts (e.g. exhibitions, flyers, press) measured by UTA? (Vice-Rector)

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- What kind of tools will be used to measure the financial returns on each and every marcom efforts (e.g. exhibitions, flyers, press)? (CEO)
 - How do you track the effectiveness of the marcom efforts? (Katja)
 - Do you track their effectiveness financially? (Katja)

4.2 Management Readiness Data Collection Methods

This part of research applied two instruments in data collection, a questionnaire and some interview items. The questionnaire instrument (Appendix 1) was adopted from Chris Fill's Marketing Communication Planning Framework (MCPF), some minor alterations were made in terms of wording (Figure 6). Planning in marketing communications or in marketing in general plays a crucial role in determining success or failure, as highlighted in the literature review. It is suggested by Fill that the planning framework can apply to a market, a brand or even a campaign. With the help of MCPF, in our study some elements of the management readiness to export education to the Chinese market were tested. The key lies in looking for contradictions that are revealed by the answers to the instrument. As we took a look at the state of organisation integration with the APQC's Four Revolutionary Stage framework, the alignment of the top management is, if not more important, at least as important.

4.2.1 Sampling for Micro-level study

Notably, MCPF is an instrument used by marketing managers when preparing, implementing and evaluating communication strategies and plans. In the sampling for the last level of our investigation it was clear that at such early stage of export operations there is no such unit to handle marketing. No one ever mentions a person as the marketing manager. Therefore, as we are testing the management readiness on this stage of the analysis, the questionnaires were distributed to the top management of education export at UTA. This criterion ruled out quite many possible respondents and only two were satisfactory: Vice-Rector Professor Harri Melin and the CEO of Finland University Inc., Mr. Pasi Kaskinen.

4.2.2 Questionnaire instrument

In the questionnaire the elements of the MCPF were transformed into decision categories (See Appendix 1). Under each decision category the decision items were coded from Fill's depiction of the framework. The biggest limitation of this framework is that the actors that should execute the plan are not specified. However, this is beyond the scope of our study. Given the small sample size, research can't expect to yield quantitative results that would be useful or to aim for generalizability. Rather, the intention is to clarify the degree to which the management of the two main organisations are ready for education export. This implies having qualitative interpretivist and constructionist results. This, according to Alan Bryman (2008), suggests "tendencies rather than definitive connections".

There were 45 items in total on the questionnaire. They are mostly short phrases and the coding was developed from Fill's depiction of the framework, which has been used by a number of organisations. To give the respondents a clear picture of where these items came from, they were categorised according to general aspects of the planning process, such as "Decisions on marketing communication objectives" and "Decisions on resources". There were two options for responding to these items, either "planned" or "not yet planned". An additional column was provided for respondents to give more information if they wished to do so.

A hard copy of the questionnaire was distributed to the two respondents on the same day as the scheduled interviews. The respondents were asked to fill the sheet in after the interviews, and clarifications were provided onsite when needed.

4.3 Focus Group

The focus group in this study is not considered a primary instrument in data collection, but rather as a validation method. The focus group gathered the members of UTA's Education Export Group (EEG) representing the different units of the university, including the nine schools, the Student Union TAMY, CEREC, and the adult education unit. The focus group was arranged as part of routine meeting of the EEG Group on 3 June 3 2014. Chaired by the Vice-Rector Professor Harri Melin, there

were 10 members present and they all took part in the focus group. These participants were from the School of Management, the School of Education, the School of Information Sciences, the School of Communications, Media and Theatre, the Student Union TAMY, CEREC and the Adult Education Unit.

The preliminary findings of this study on both organisational and manager levels were presented with the help of Prezi, an online software programme that is free to use. The presentation slideshow is titled Communication Optimisation and the link is: <http://prezi.com/ld2hi0kkgw4c/communication-optimisation/>. The presentation lasted 15 minutes. Every participant either asked questions about or commented on the presentation. The results were used to validate, or not, the findings that are reported next.

5. Data Analysis and Results

The results and findings are reported in a format that is keyed to the marketing orientation measures. The results of the two instruments – the interviews based on APQC’s The Four Revolutionary Stages of IMC and the questionnaire generated from Chris Fill’s Marketing Communication Planning Framework (MCPF) – are reported first so the two sub-questions are answered. Then combining the results from the focus group, participation observation and artefacts analysis, the empirical findings are themed into five market orientation measures. The ultimate purpose is to answer the fundamental question “How ready is UTA for export education to China?”.

5.1 Organisation Integration

How integrated is UTA according to APQC’s The Four Revolutionary Stages of IMC framework? The key task was to identify any problems embedded in current operations that could undermine the export operations, especially important when an organisation is new to exporting. By analysing the discourse of the interview respondents in the light of our indicators, potential problems were identified.

The interview transcripts were aggregated with categorical answers under each indicator, as explained earlier. For each stage, five to six themes emerged from these transcripts. Those that failed to fulfil the requirements of the indicator were labelled “problems”. Those that fulfilled the indicators were labelled “things to cling to”, meaning the University of Tampere could build integration on the basis of these as good practices. These good practices matched how best practice companies utilise IMC, and provide a grounding for UTA and its newly launched export company to handle further planning and to develop co-ordination mechanisms.

Table 3 below summarises results from the interviews for the organisation level of investigation. If the stage has more “good practices” than “problems” we consider the stage of integration achieved. If the stage has an equal number of “good practices” and “problems”, or more “problems” than “good

practices”, the integration is not achieved. The study makes it clear that the second stage is achieved integration (colour coded green), while the rest are not (colour coded red). In terms of doing education export, UTA and its joint venture export company have a great deal of planning to do in order to build effective co-ordination mechanisms to ensure success and superior performance in the international education export marketplace.

Stage 1 Coordination of tactical communication efforts (did not reach)
<i>Problems:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No operationalized, procedure manual for marketing communication activities • No clear unit coordinates the messages and the channels • No clear unit controls over the image building
<i>Cling to these:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTA has a written form communication policy • UTA uses cross-functional meetings to discuss communication issues • UTA uses personal non-linear communications
Stage 2 Redefining scope of marketing communication (reached integration)
<i>Problems:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No organisational-wide awareness of marketing mission • No organisational-wide customer data sharing
<i>Cling to these:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTA collects large amounts of customer data • UTA uses feedback channels at different contacts with the customer • Internal practice is aligned with the promise to the customer
Stage 3 Application of Information Technology (did not reach integration)
<i>Problems:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTA does not project a customer's long-term profitability to the organisation • UTA does not know the cost to acquire and retain a customer • Units that are responsible for planning marketing communications does not have timely access to the customer data
<i>Cling to these:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTA uses information technology to a large extend in internal and external communications • UTA has adequate infrastructure for understanding customer data
Stage 4: Financial and strategic integration (did not reach integration)
<i>Problems:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The units that are likely to be responsible for the marketing communication activities do not have prominent roles in strategic planning and new product introduction of education export • UTA does not measure the financial returns on marketing communication efforts
<i>Cling to these:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The units that are likely to be responsible for the marketing communication activities have moderate visibility at UTA • UTA tracks somewhat effectiveness of its marketing communication efforts

Table 3: Results from APQC's Four Revolutionary Stages. Source: own table.

5.2 Managerial Readiness

How ready are the management to export education to China? The results of the MCPF questionnaire (see Appendix 1) were analysed from two perspectives. First, the responses from the

two questionnaire sheets were looked at respectively. One response has 17 out of 44 items marked as “planned”, which accounts for 38.6% (rounded). The second has 21 out of 44 items marked as “planned”, which accounts for 47.7% (rounded). Both indicate a low degree of readiness in marketing communication planning, and the fact that there is such wide discrepancy between the two respondents suggests this as well. One respondents suggested that some of the items were not applicable to the situation they were in and would have preferred Likert scales instead of dichotomous options (yes or no).

The “context analysis” and “marketing communication objectives” were the two categories that received the most “planned” items = 14 out of 17 and 16 out of 21 respectively. In MCPF, these categories are located at the beginning of the planning process, in the first and second steps. Scanning the environment, the internal and external context, is suggested to be the start of marketing communications planning. Indeed, respondents perceived as planned an average of 53.6% of the items in this category. The same pertains to the category “marketing communication objectives”. This corresponds to the results of the organisation integration analysis.

Second, the contradictions between the two respondents were examined. In total 14 items were marked differently by the respondents, accounting for a 30.0% difference (rounded) across the items. Both respondents exclusively informed about a board meeting taken place the week after the interview, and implied the possibility of different answers if this instrument was applied after the board meeting. Both made notes in the “additional information” column for the item “Corporate and marketing strategy and plans” about the meeting. However, the results still suggest a quite large degree of differences among the top managers on the board. We do not doubt that different answers would result later compared with earlier in the process, or indeed that different answers can result if the same instrument were used under slightly varied conditions. But the degree of difference is large enough to indicate problems that need to be addressed.

5.3 Measuring Market Orientation

5.3.1 Customer-orientation

Customer-orientation refers to information generation concerning the target audience/s as the customer for the product or service, and their assessments of the quality of those products and services (Narver & Slater, 1990, cited in Cadogan & Diamantopoulos, 1995). This relates to the second stage in APQC's Four Revolutionary Stages of IMC. In the pilot training programmes with Chinese customers, collecting feedback was considered an important part of the training. Feedback forms were designed with quantitative ratings and qualitative responses. The teaching group made efforts to ensure high response rates. These responses were analysed and reported to all the people involved in providing the trainings. Although not part of this study's data collection per se, the researcher made two feedback analyses and reports during the course of this study.

In addition, the university has a quite mature assessment system at different levels of the organisation. Feedback is collected at different contact points with customers, and notably in this regard, the university seems comfortable referring to the students as customers. Therefore it is fair to say that UTA is successful in mirroring its services from the customer's perspective, and in using feedback to develop its services.

The customer-orientation is also evident given the fact that both the export company, Finland University Inc., and the university are devoting large resources to install a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This system could solve the problem of lacking organisation-wide data sharing and truly improve efficiency in responding to the customers in education export.

5.3.2 Competitor orientation

From the MCPF questionnaire, both of the top managers in education export ticked "Not yet planned" for the item related to "Competitor analysis". Indeed, as the respondents more generally suggest "at such an early stage of the operation ..." it should be understandable that such aspects are not yet done.

One reason for not looking at competitors may not be in the timing but rather perceptual, however. It could be keyed to the fact that the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland encourages “co-operation” instead of “competition” among actors in education export markets. Discussing whether this policy is valid is beyond the scope of our research, however. In this study a finding from the interview with the Head of the Press and Information Office suggests some grounds for developing a competitor analysis system in UTA education export. In tracking the effectiveness of their marketing communication efforts, the Press and Information Office uses benchmarking methods to compare news coverage data with rivals. Although it does not track competitors’ activities, it does generate some information intelligence for self-development purposes.

Lacking competitor-orientation could also be rooted in the organisational culture because a couple of respondents in this study mentioned UTA as “the most popular university in Finland”. As both the Vice-Rector and the Head of the Press and Information Office suggested, “We do not do any domestic marketing”. Of course this really is not a valid point when the focus is on international markets. How well known and respected UTA is at home says little about its readiness and viability in the increasingly competitive export education marketplace. But of course not needing to market at home can certainly explain not prioritising this in the early stages of development for international markets. It could be a ‘blind spot’ for some, although not for the Vice-Rector. He observed that as a less internationalised university, “Our PR is very weak at the international level”. This could be a disadvantage for UTA in competing for Chinese higher education customers because the competition is not only with other training providers in Finland but with the competitors globally – and many of those have highly developed marketing skills, e.g. the USA.

5.3.3 Export co-ordination

This entails inter- and intra-functional co-ordination. When involving an international dimension for an already big but domestic organisation that is inexperienced in exporting, the organisational structure must become more complex (Strandskov, 1986, cited in Cadogan & Diamantopoulos, 1995). That is generally the case, and must be even more so when jointly owned by three universities and a

new company. Here we only look at the co-ordination between UTA and Finland University Inc., but it is useful to keep this more general condition in mind.

The results of the organisation level and the managerial level of integration both suggest weak export co-ordination at UTA for the moment. The APQC's framework has revealed a relatively low degree of co-ordination in tactical communication efforts for UTA's education export operations, and a very low degree of financial and strategic integration at this point. The top managers on the board are in contradiction to a rather high extent in responses to the MCPF's questionnaire.

Although the Press and Information Office uses cross-functional meetings to plan some of the communication activities, such practice has not been evident in education export activities. Neither is there as yet one unit mandated with co-ordinating the messages and channels for both external and internal marketing communications with regard to operations in education export, and nor does any unit have responsibility (and thus control) over image building in the Chinese market.

Finland University Inc. insisted on taking over all the marketing operations because "the university does not do marketing" (Focus group). However, as suggested by the best practice IMC companies, the integration ought to be managed inside the organisation that is providing the service. It is peculiar from an IMC perspective to overlook the resources and expertise of an existing public relations department in this enterprise, or at least arguably unwise to neglect sufficient involvement by them. Given the comparative degree of marketing and communication expertise possessed, the media channels already managed, and the university's public image duties they have for Finland, one could think the Press and Information Office (P&I Office) would have a useful and important strategic role in UTA education export. As the Head of the P&I Office, Ms. Katja Kannonlahti, said in her interview, "I only see the communication part of education export". Since communication is so far the biggest problem perceived (Study by a group of international students from the Master's Degree Programme in Research and Innovation in Higher Education, Green et al., 2014) in the education export operations at UTA, the key to solve the problem is to utilise the expertise and plan the communication issues at a strategic level.

The least integrated part of the Four Revolutionary Stages of IMC evident at UTA for export education is the link between communication efforts and financial returns. Some of this non-integration may be overcome in building a functional CRM system, for instance being able to project a customer's long-term profitability for the organisation, the costs to acquire and retain a customer, and timely accessibility to the customer by marketing communication planners. However, in order to measure financial returns on marketing communication efforts both internally and externally, the project requires close inter-functional co-ordination across units that must include the UTA financial department, the export unit, the marketing and communications unit, and the training provider unit.

As demonstrated in responses to the MCPF questionnaire, 14 out of 44 items were marked differently by the Vice-Rector and the CEO, eight of which were at the early stage of marketing communication planning. These items are "levels of awareness, perception and attitudes towards the brand and organisation", "brand and organisation analysis", "culture, values and beliefs", "marketing expertise", "agency availability and suitability", "social, political, economic and technological restraints and opportunities", "sales volumes" and "profitability indicators". Although it is absolutely expected that top management would not need to know every detail on the operational level, such a large degree of contradiction in so many key areas implies low intra-functional co-ordination at the present time.

5.3.4 Export competence

Export competence refers to international knowledge and experience (Julien & Ramangalahy, 2003, cited in Naidoo, 2010). In our case, this can be understood as Chinese market knowledge and previous experience with that market. The answers to the interview item, "How should we understand UTA's China strategy for education export", may tell a lot in this respect. The general answer from all the respondents was that UTA does not yet have that knowledge and isn't obviously certain how to get it. Although UTA seems to be moving faster than other Finnish HEIs to adopt internationalisation strategies, and is at least at the front of the curve, as indicated in a China-focused partnership (CEREC at UTA) and marketization of HE (Joint ownership of Finland University Inc.) here, the heavy work that now looms hinges on not only further developing strategies and the knowledge needed for that,

but moreover in translating all of that into operations – and moreover ensuring that the operations in export education are successful.

In the interviews, the China strategy question seemed to arrive as a shock, especially to the top management respondents. They seemed only to begin pondering the issue when asked about it in the interviews. Perhaps not, and they might have been reluctant to share some knowledge or to have been mulling over how best to respond. But it seemed that there was some ‘novelty’ in the question. Their responses did converge on one point, at least. The Vice-Rector treated the China strategy as an issue of market selection: “our strengths are ... in the Chinese market, these were proved from a trip to China.” The CEO of Finland University Inc. also mentioned selecting markets, but in that case for selecting markets within China and determining competitive advantages. The results of the MCPF questionnaire also contribute to this measure. UTA’s education export operation as a whole was not clear about Chinese customer’s awareness, perceptions and attitudes towards the brand and organisation, and never mentioned any objectives related to market share or knowledge about profitability indicators.

Although UTA hosted three groups of Chinese trainees within the paradigm of its definition of education export activities, these groups were trained at the school level or by outside training providers. The top management identified in this study did not gain any managerial experience from these trainings. This lack of experience was further underpinned by the results of macro-level study of organisation integration.

According to Four Revolutionary Stages framework, UTA’s Communication Programme 2011 – 2015 (see electronic sources) was compared against the best practice companies’ in APQC’s study. Although this document was announced long before UTA wanted to commit to education export, the contents of it revealed the lack of marketing expertise. In the beginning of the document, it was explicitly recognised that “the university must not only inform its operations, but also actively market itself in order to improve its influence and publicity” (emphasis added). However, this principle was not discussed or developed further in the “outbound communication” section where the university

website was considered to be the key instrument. There was no mention of such terms as “marketing”, and “being presence on social media” seems to be the most radical idea. It is also uncertain why the logic presumes that online websites and social media are sufficient to win the competition and succeed in education export. On the face of it this seems quite insufficient, especially when this is new for UTA and to the Chinese market.

The next time we see “marketing” is in the actors and responsibilities session — “Study Service takes care of the university’s marketing to domestic and international students”. That is all. There is no apparent understanding of marketing mix. Public relations was regarded as a completely separate discipline from marketing. “We will tell them (the Press and Information Office) once the business has taken off.” Both in some of the interviews and in the focus group, respondents wanted to justify a model where Finland University Inc. handles all the marketing and the university’s Press and Information Office tells success stories (once there are some to tell). It is worrisome that this does not generate much confidence in the plans or capabilities for a project of such potential importance, scope and scale as UTA education export to China.

The reception of the recommendation that marketing communication integration should be managed inside the UTA organisation, and that internal marketing matters as well as the point that external marketing communication should be part of the strategy planning and the two aspects planned together at the beginning of education export was not accepted in the focus group. “We are in a totally different environment as the US and the UK ... (that is why) we should not take such advice at all” (focus group).

Although such remarks were not echoed by other respondents, this demonstrates a lack of marketing knowledge and expertise among the people who are currently involved in education export at UTA. It also indicates a lack of proper respect for and appreciation of the level of competition and competitors the university and its company faces in China. While it is undoubtedly true that Finland is not the USA or the UK, and that how things work here is not the same, that is irrelevant to the focus of their education export project. China has many exporters from the USA and the UK and if UTA

cannot compete effectively they will lose money and face – at home in Finland. It is not really possible to competently manage something one knows little or nothing about, and extremely unlikely to succeed if even the importance is rejected out of hand.

5.3.5 Management commitment

This factor is approached with attitudinal and behavioural measures. The top management's attitudinal commitment was examined through the interview item: "How do you see your involvement in education export at the moment and in the near future?" The Vice-Rector and the CEO saw themselves important for the long-term leadership for education export operations. They indicated being committed to the leadership position and had not apparent doubts.

They are both heavily involved in promoting education export. The Vice-Rector is at the same time the chairperson of several steering groups, including the Education Export Group (EEG) and the Chinese Education, Research and Exchange Centre Network (CEREC Network). The CEO travels among the three partner universities to update the export company's current status. They both attend conferences and seminars to spread the news about the company and UTA's plans and efforts in education export. They also made a trip to Asia to promote these education programmes. So there is no doubt that management commitment is high in all these respects. What remains to be seen is the degrees to which this commitment and the leadership role will pursue and encourage development in the various aspects across stages where research has demonstrated weakness at the moment.

To summarise, the research findings suggest that UTA has relatively low market orientation concerning its education export ambition. From an organisational perspective, it is very customer-oriented but has under-developed export co-ordination mechanisms, an underdeveloped competitor-orientation, and very limited education export experience with China. Besides the non-marketing culture of Finnish HEIs, the low integration has resulted from overlooking the strategic importance of internal marketing communication. Less international experience requires even more attention to intra- and inter-functional co-ordination, so that the whole organisation's responsiveness to the opportunities in the Chinese market can be truly improved.

On the management level, the top management has strong commitment to make the education export operations successful, but they have not fully understood the Chinese market dynamic or yet analysed the market opportunities that IMC suggests are crucial for making a sound strategic plan. Inside the organisation, they have not yet crystallised an operational action plan concerning information dissemination and measuring investment on return, and there is high uncertainty – evidently also some resistance to – developing responsibility for marketing and expertise in marketing communications practice.

Nevertheless, there are good practices recognised by the study and these should be preserved and further developed to nurture export operations. As mentioned earlier, the new export unit complicates the organisation of these operations, but there is certainly many opportunities in management recognition of the importance of managing the communications element. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is a valid option that connects the organisation to a strong market orientation and, most importantly, will be conducive to a more successful performance in UTA education export.

6. Discussion and Theoretical and Managerial Implications

6.1 The theories

This study utilised a complex analytical framework. Each component (IMC, market orientation and export readiness) has been widely used in the business world, and have been adopted and tested in the HE sector of the US, UK, Australia and even Finland. Each part of the analytical framework was important to clarify and explain something involved in the on-going marketization of the Finnish HE sector, particularly regarding the export of education endeavour. Finnish HEIs should find these theories useful for greater clarity, growing maturity and in their benchmarking significance.

However, some findings did not confirm these theories. One important instance is the incremental stages of IMC. According to APQC's proposal, organisations should proceed in developing integration from the foundation of tactical co-ordination to the top stage of financial and strategic integration. UTA has not proceeded that way. From the empirical data, it was evident that the organisation first achieved the second stage of integration by involving the customer perspective. Then taking consideration of the feedback that UTA is investing heavily on developing an organisational-wide CRM system from the focus group, the third stage of applying information technology in marketing communication planning and execution is likely to be achieved next. Although the integration of stages 1 and 4 cannot be predicted based on existing data, UTA is not proceeding in the same way as other business enterprises studied in APQC's best practices research. It remains to be seen whether this difference will make a significant difference in UTA's success (or lack), and in that light whether the APQC model is indeed a standard.

Similar to the findings in Edmiston-Strasser's study on the adoption of IMC in US public institutions of HE, the integration process at UTA is not proceeding in the recommended sequence. It is therefore possible that HE institutions have unique characteristics that determine the different path of integration. Again, that will only become clearer when the results of UTA's endeavour is operational. But it is arguably problematic that due to the lack of marketing tradition, this organisation is only

equipped with a PR function instead of a broader marketing communication unit. Without the other tools in a marketing mix, tactical integration is not actually possible and thus integration simply cannot begin at APQC's start from stage 1. We suspect this is problematic for competitive success in China.

Far more research will be needed to establish the degrees to which the IMC approach is fully (or not) applicable to the not-for-profit sector, and to develop appropriate instrumentation for measuring the value for the money. Returns on investment are more developed for commercial enterprises than public sector operations.

6.2 The instruments

Due to the small sample size, an interview instrument was developed based on APQC's Four Revolutionary Stages of IMC instead of a questionnaire. Questionnaires are the most commonly used instrument for testing this framework. The rationale behind our choice is twofold. Firstly, the purpose of the research was to benchmark the case university's communication in education export operations against best practices in IMC. This is inherently different from testing the fit between IMC integration stages to explain current operations in the case organisation. A questionnaire is less likely to uncover details about the rationale for why respondents are doing what they are doing. Particularly, as discussed earlier, the discovery that UTA does not have a marketing communication department is only likely to have emerged as a result of the interviews.

Secondly, in-depth interviews ensure higher intensity responses and reduce standard errors caused by ambiguity of items. In the face-to-face interview, ambiguity can be addressed with explanation. For instance, in the interview with Ms. Katja Kannonlahti, the Head of the Press and Information Office, we broke some broad questions into several smaller sub-questions to clarify their meaning. Moreover, a semi-structured interview increases flexibility in data collection. I was able to ask some China related questions to all the respondents, but it would be impossible to so easily or clearly segment / version items in a questionnaire strictly calculated to indicate the IMC stages.

Of course there are drawbacks in the instrument choice, as well. Data processing was hardest for determining the degree of integration. Although the questions were designed according to pre-coded indicators, in a semi-structured interview the respondent's answers did not always correspond to the indicators. Sometimes the discourse and the indicators diverge entirely and respondents end up mainly addressing an earlier or different item when responding to a particular indicator. The whole analysis process therefore requires a lot more work than processing rigidly structured and quantified data. Another significant drawback in using an interview instrument is also related to data processing: this type of data makes it impossible to quantify degrees of integration. Finally, subjectivity is always an issue and needs to be handled with transparency and critical awareness. Therefore, to offset excessive subjectivity, the data were coded into "problems" and "things to cling to".

The questionnaire instrument could be developed in the future research. As suggested by one respondent, instead of using the dichotomous "planned" or "not yet planned" options, a Likert scale could be used to better establish if an item is in the planning process but not yet completed.

6.3 Managerial Implications

6.3.1 "Mind the term you use" – different messages to different audiences

When Finland's Ministry of Education used "education export" in their internationalisation strategy 2009 – 2015, the term clearly indicated international student recruitment. In fact, the term is globally perceived as a synonym for transnational education. Education for professionals and made-to-order education programmes that UTA is focusing on in their export provision are actually marginal in the concept "education export".

For this reason, the university has been educating its employees to understand this new definition and lower the resistance. This does not seem to be a very efficient way to involve the internal audience. Having people on board is the antecedent to everything at the pre-export phase. As Cavusgil (1984, cited in Cadogan & Diamantopoulos, 1995) explained, if there is an export department (in this case an export company) it is likely to be fairly autonomous from other departments within the organisation. Therefore conflicts can be expected over scarce resources, which could hamper and

undermine the endeavour. To avoid such losses, the university might need to launch a “capacity building” programme where the frontline personnel receive training in markets, marketing and customer service. This could offset some of the disadvantages found in the study, namely the lack of export competence and market knowledge.

Similarly, the university should not expect to educate the potential customer to understand what it means by “education export”, particularly in this case when the potential customer in the Chinese market is rooted in academic co-operation. The situation is similar to marketer from a British university who shared her experience in successfully franchising their paid education programmes in Asia, noting that everything started with a small consulting paper. Instead of aggressively selling this, university might gain reputation and trust by offering consulting services to help improve, say, a degree programme in a Chinese university. In a perfect scenario, the Chinese university may ask to licence some modules from UTA or collaborate in developing a teaching and degree programme that could later become a franchise. The point to be noted is that there is not enough evident thought about what is required for success in the current strategy and that other options might better secure both incremental success and build future opportunities.

6.3.2 “What is the strategic purpose?” – putting the sale volumes into numbers before asking people to join in

From the results of the management level study of integration, the University of Tampere’s education export seems too abstract at this point. We did not find concrete operation models, market and sales estimates, a marketing plan, any pilot products, etc. that have been shared with the internal stakeholders. Even our group (I was one of them) who drafted the Principle of Education Export at the University of Tampere have not seen such materials. Perhaps they exist, but if so why are they not being shared? Moreover, if they do not exist, then how confident should one be of success (or even competence, for that matter)?

This could be a dreadful problem if the export company drifts away from or is not aligned with the principle provider organisation. That said, we are not necessarily advocating centralised control. That

is a typical danger in adopting IMC strategies; they can easily become top-down initiatives that fail to involve the people responsible for delivering on the promises made to customers. Adding an export function to the organisation and hoping people will be committed amounts to a tremendous ‘leap of faith’, requiring enormous and potentially painful changes and adding great complexity to an organisation. This scale of change simply cannot be subtle.

The HEIs in Finland are strong supporters of transparency. An internationalisation project that is not transparent can only generate suspicion and stir resistance. Everything involved with plans and objectives for education export should be opened for discussion and debate as soon as clarified but before final decisions are made. Lacking that, the potential for mistakes must be higher because expert input will be missing and the degree of support can only be weaker than otherwise. If the existing traditional organisational structure resists a market-oriented culture for the general practice, it is also likely that a new customer-centric integrated model could be built on the basis of education export operations. Transparency is important to identify employees and faculty with interest in achieving this and expertise in helping make it work.

6.3.3 “What actually makes it sustainable” – keeping an eye on the international student recruitment

Nearly all of the occasions and documents related to education export use the word “sustainability” as a core concept. What does it mean, and is there a meaning agreed by everyone? Sustainability comes from scholarship on ecology where it pertains to the ways a biological system remains diverse and productive both with and despite changes. For education export, sustainability depends on cumulative and recurrent successes in international student recruitment because that is the prerequisite for sustaining the project’s economic development and for its contributions to growing the diversity of Finland’s society and cultures. The ultimate goal of education export in UTA’s view is to increase the popularity of Finland and Finnish education abroad, so that the top level students would apply for the Finnish HEIs and bring in valuable human resources to grow the Finnish economy.

7. Limitations and Future Research

This research has low generalizability given the unique setting of our case. In addition, the sampling method also reduces generalizability. However, generalizability is not the pursuit of this research, but rather applying an analytical framework for problem identification in the pre-export phase of education export. The research results and findings are specifically based on the samples' expertise and experiences, and aimed at identifying problems that are pertinent to achieving the organisation's strategic objectives. Further research may expand the sample to include UTA's other two university partners (the University of Turku and the Eastern Finland University) in the education export venture. And it would be useful to also identify universities outside Finland that are also engaged in education export to enable cross-cultural and international comparison.

Another potential limitation is the research methodology design, which combines both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. The mixed methodology may be criticised by purists in either camp (Wilson, 2005, cited in Edmiston-Strasser, 2009). This methodological choice is a result of considerations about the value of "triangulation". But it is also related to the scarcity of existing studies on IMC research related to HEIs, which prevents replication of past research and related methods (*ibid.*). This scarcity is largely a result of resistance to the concepts of marketing and branding in HEIs, not only in Finland but far more generally (*ibid.*). Since Finland is determined to enter the global HE marketplace, more research on marketing and communications in Finnish HEIs is really needed to optimise success and minimise the probabilities of failure. A waste of money and mounting embarrassment are not in anyone's best interests. At the moment both benchmarking studies and exploration of effective co-ordination mechanism in education export are beneficial topics for the Finnish HE sector.

As the education export co-ordination has been identified as one of the biggest problems in the current operations of UTA, further research could analyse the operational mechanisms. Stakeholder theory seems especially useful for this. The theory could help to map out the crucial stakeholders both

internally and externally and facilitate assessing their interests and agendas. By analysing the relationships, communication links could be categorised which may increase efficiency when choosing the most appropriate messages and the most effective channels for marketing communications.

8. Conclusions

How ready is the University of Tampere to export education to China? We come back to where we started, because the export readiness holds the key to success in education export. “Readiness” is indicated by market orientation which was measured by customer-orientation, competitor orientation, export co-ordination, export competence and management commitment. The university community is very customer-centric in terms of its feedback system and the emphasis on self-development. However, the education export operation so far is product-centric (i.e. totally oppose to customer-orientation). Competitor orientation is lacking in the organisation as a whole, and export co-ordination is weak. The empirical data suggested that export competence in UTA is very poor, even though management commitment is high. Such result suggest low degree of readiness in the UTA community for education export. Therefore, the management of education export needs to see the fundamentals when preparing the whole university community for the fierce competition in the globalised market, that is to root the competitive advantage in the controllable factors that determine export success.

Competitive advantages do not have to be fancy, especially in today’s fast changing, unpredictable global environment that is full of uncontrollable factors. An integrated marketing communication strategy should be a valid advantage, because it connects the organisation to a strong market orientation, and thus higher degree of export readiness which is among those controllable factors that lead to a more successful export performance. In practice, the university should be more active to involve its own people by offering them opportunities to gain market competences (including marketing and customer service) and by sharing more information about the education export planning with the community to stimulate interest and to gain trust. Simultaneously it should be actively reaching out to the existing Chinese partner institutions, mostly to understand what their problems are and what UTA could do to help. Finally yet importantly, the success of education export has a bearing on Finland as a nation faced with social and economic challenges, and therefore the sustainability of these export projects are always judged by contributions to the Finnish society and culture, and the growth of Finnish economy.

This research is the first to test Finnish HEI's export readiness with the conceptual frameworks of IMC. Although we found that the marketing communication integration process at UTA did not proceed precisely as incremental integration model APQC's *The Four Revolutionary Stages* depicts (i.e. the second stage integration happens before the first one), the framework does help identify problems as well as good practices in UTA's communication strategies. Chris Fill's Marketing Communication Planning Framework, too, is tested somewhat compatible for studying education export in Finland. These two frameworks guided data collection effectively so that all the market orientation factors were tested with sufficient empirical evidence. This indicates the strong tie between IMC and market orientation, and the fact that adopting IMC approaches has indeed significant implications to achieving export readiness for an organisation.

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Appendix 1. Checklist of Management Readiness

Checklist of Management Readiness in Education Export to China				
Decision catagories	Decisions	Planned	Not yet planned	If the decision has not been made, where the needed information can be acquired (e.g. UTA, FinUni Ltd., Agencies)
Context Analysis (data needed to be collected)				
The consumer context	Segment characteristics			
	Levels of awareness, perception and attitudes towards the brand and organisation			
	Types of perceived risk			
The business context	Corporate and marketing strategy and plans			
	Brand and organisation analysis			
	Competitor analysis			
The internal context	Financial constraints			
	Organisation identity			
	Culture, values and beliefs			
	Marketing expertise			
	Agency availability and suitability			
The external context	Who are the key stakeholders and why are they important?			
	What are their communication needs?			
	Social, political, economic and technological restraints and opportunities			
Marketing communication objectives				
Corporate objectives	Business areas			
	Business mission			
Marketing objectives (sales-related objectives)	Market share			
	Sales revenues			
	Volumes			
	Return on investment			
	Profitability indicators			
Communication objectives (determined campaign-wise, tick the objectives suit the current context)	Category need			
	Brand awareness			
	Brand knowledge			
	Brand attitude			
	Brand purchase intension			
	Purchase facilitation			
	Satisfaction			
	Brand loyalty			
Marketing communication strategy	Needs of the audience			
	Pull-positioning			
	Push-positioning			
	Profile-positioning			
Communication methods	Communication mix(es) justified by positioning			
Scheduling	Communication schedules with different stakeholders			
Resources	Financial issues			
	Marketing expertise			
	the time available			
Control and Evaluation	Midcourse adjustments			
	The performance periodic progress reviews			
	Anecdotal reports			
	Direct observation			
Feedback	Formal			
	Systematic			

